PDC 58370-9

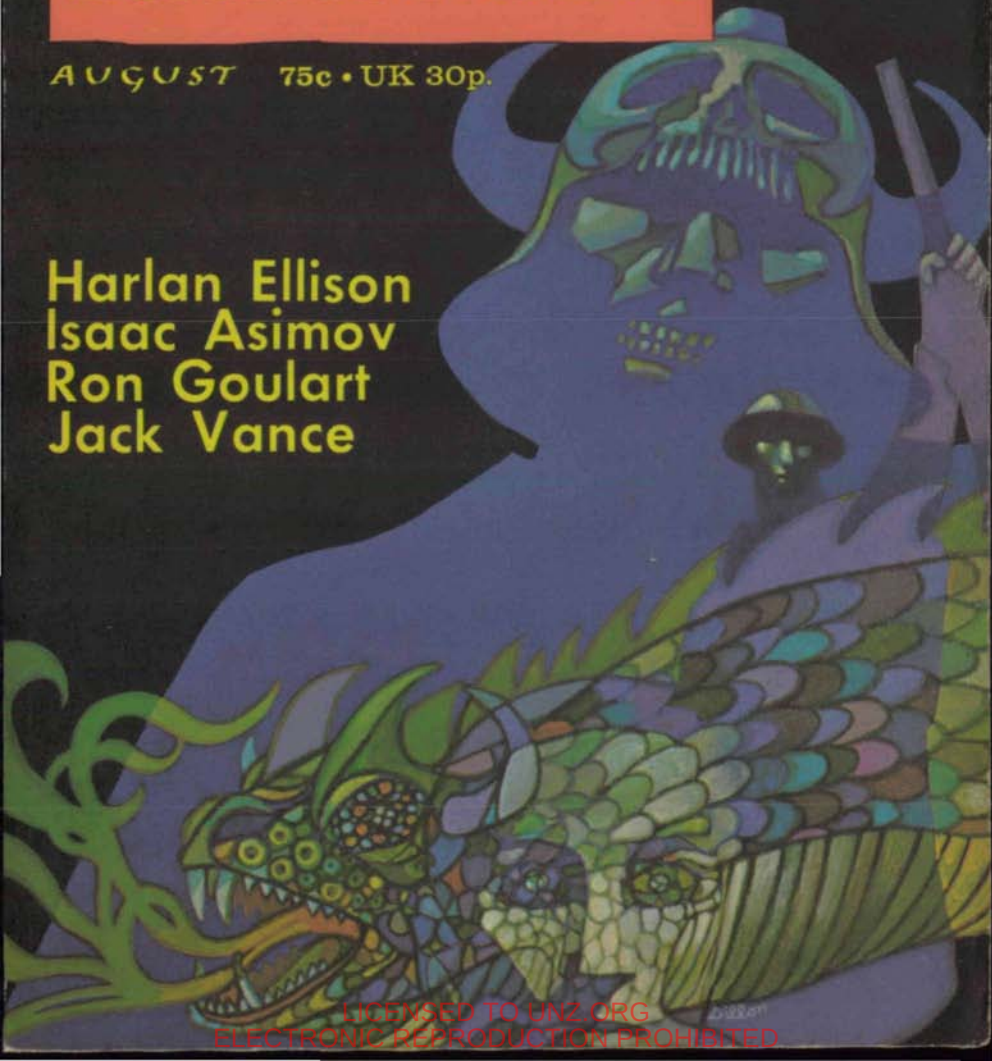
THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy AND Science Fiction

A MERCURY PUBLICATION

AUGUST 75c • UK 30p.

Harlan Ellison
Isaac Asimov
Ron Goulart
Jack Vance



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fantasy and Science Fiction

Including Venture Science Fiction

AUGUST • 23rd YEAR OF PUBLICATION

NOVEL

The Brave Free Men *(2nd of 2 parts)* — JACK VANCE 36

NOVELET

To Gild A Unicorn — WILLIAM LEE 126

SHORT STORIES

Basilisk — HARLAN ELLISON 4

Engineer to the Gods — JOHN SLADEK 28

Jelna — JERRY SOHL 90

Gigolo — RON GOULART 101

If At First You Don't Succeed — CHARLES E. FRITCH 112

FEATURES

Books — GAHAN WILSON 21

Cartoon — GAHAN WILSON 27

Films — BAIRD SEARLES 34

Science: Doctor, Doctor, Cut My Throat — ISAAC ASIMOV 116

Cover by Leo and Diane Dillon for "Basilisk"

Edward L. Ferman, EDITOR & PUBLISHER Isaac Asimov, SCIENCE EDITOR

Andrew Porter, ASSISTANT EDITOR, Dale Beardale, CIRCULATION MANAGER

Joseph W. Ferman, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NO: 51-25682

The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Volume 43, No. 2, Whole No. 255, Aug. 1972. Published monthly by Mercury Press, Inc. at 75¢ per copy. Annual subscription $8.50; $9.00 in Canada and Mexico, $9.50 in other foreign countries. Postmaster: send form 3579 to Fantasy and Science Fiction, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753. Publication office, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753. Editorial submissions should be sent to 347 East 53rd St., New York, N.Y. 10022. Second class postage paid at Cornwall, Conn. 06753 and at additional mailing offices. Printed in U.S.A.

Copyright © 1972 by Mercury Press, Inc. All rights, including translations into other languages, reserved. Submissions must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. The publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Of his new story, Harlan Ellison says: "It says what I have wanted to say about war for many years and simply could not find the idiom with which to say it. I have very specifically included things in the background that are incorrect as far as the Vietnam war is concerned . . . because I don't want anyone to be able to escape the point that this *is* but *is not* Vietnam, , at the same time. It is a myth, set in the real world, but larger than, overflowing if you will, the real world."

Basilisk

by HARLAN ELLISON

What though the Moor the basilisk has slain
And pinned him lifeless to the sandy plain,
Up through the spear the subtle venom flies,
The hand imbibes it, and the victor dies.
LUCAN: *Pharsalia*

RETURNING FROM A NIGHT patrol beyond the perimeter of the firebase, Lance Corporal Vernon Lestig fell into a trail trap set by hostiles. He was bringing up the rear, covering the patrol's withdrawal from recently overrun sector eight, when he fell too far behind and lost the bush track. Though he had no way of knowing he was paralleling the patrol's trail, thirty yards off their left flank, he kept moving forward hoping to intersect them. He did not see the pungi stakes set at cruel angles, frosted with poison, tilted for top-point efficiency, sharpened to infinity.

Two set close together penetrated the barricade of his boot; the first piercing the arch and his weight driving it up and out to emerge just below the ankle bone, still inside the boot; the other ripping through the sole and splintering against the fibula above the heel, without breaking the skin.

Every circuit shorted out, every light bulb blew, every vacuum imploded, snakes shed their skins, wagon wheels creaked, plate glass windows

Copyright © 1972 by Harlan Ellison

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shattered, dentist drills ratcheted across nerve ends, vomit burned tracks up through throats, hymen were torn, fingernails bent double dragged down blackboards, water came to a boil; lava. Nova pain. Lestig's heart stopped, lubbed, began again, stuttered; his brain went dead refusing to accept the load; all senses came to full stop; he staggered sidewise with his untouched left foot, pulling one of the pungi stakes out of the ground, and was unconscious even during the single movement; and fainted, simply directly fainted with the pain.

This was happening: great black gap-mawed beast padding through outer darkness toward him. On a horizonless journey through myth, coming toward the moment *before* the piercing of flesh. Lizard dragon beast with eyes of oil-slick pools, ultraviolet death colors smoking in their depths. Corded silk-flowing muscles sliding beneath the black hairless hide, trained sprinter from a lost land, smoothest movements of choreographed power. The never-sleeping guardian of the faith, now gentlestepping down through mists of potent barriers erected to separate men from their masters.

In that moment before the boot touched the bamboo spike, the basilisk passed through the final veils of confounding time and space and dimension and thought, to assume palpable shape in the forest world of Vernon Lestig. And in the translation was changed, altered wonderfully. The black, thick and oily hide of the deathbreath dragon beast shimmered, heat lightning across flat prairie land, golden flashes seen spattering beyond mountain peaks, and the great creature was a thousand colored. Green diamonds burned up from the skin of the basilisk, the deadly million eyes of a nameless god. Rubies gorged with the water-thin blood of insects sealed in amber from the dawn of time pulsed there. Golden jewels changing from instant to instant, shape and scent and hue. . .they were there in the tapestry mosaic of the skin picture. A delicate, subtle, gaudy flashmaze kaleidoscope of flesh, taut over massive muscled threats.

The basilisk was in the world.

And Lestig had yet to experience his pain.

The creature lifted a satin-padded paw and laid it against the points of the pungi stakes. Slowly, the basilisk relaxed and the stakes pierced the rough sensitive blackmoon shapes of the pads. Dark, steaming serum flowed down over the stakes, mingling with the Oriental poison. The basilisk withdrew

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

its paw and the twin wounds healed in an instant, closed over and were gone.

Were gone. Bunching of muscles, a leap into air, a cauldron roiling of dark air, and the basilisk sprang up into nothing and was gone. Was gone.

As the moment came to an exhalation of end, and Vernon Lestig walked onto the pungi stakes.

It is a well-known fact that one whose blood slakes the thirst of the *vorvalaka*, the vampire, becomes himself one of the drinkers of darkness, becomes a celebrant of the master deity, becomes himself possessed of the powers of the disciples of that deity.

The basilisk had not come from the vampires, nor were his powers those of the blood drinkers. It was not by chance that the basilisk's master had sent him to recruit Lance Corporal Vernon Lestig. There is an order to the darkside universe.

He fought consciousness, as if on some cellular level he knew what pain awaited him with the return of his senses. But the red tide washed higher, swallowed more and more of his deliquescent body, and finally the pain thundered in from the blood-sea, broke in a long, curling comber and coenesthesia was upon him totally. He screamed, and the scream went on and on for a long time, till they came back to him and gave him an injection of something that thinned the pain, and he lost contact with the chaos that had been his right foot.

When he came back again, it was dark and at first he thought it was night, but when he opened his eyes, it was still dark. His right foot itched mercilessly. He went back to sleep, no coma, sleep.

When he came back again, it was still night and he opened his eyes and realized he was blind. He felt straw under his left hand and knew he was on a pallet and knew he had been captured; and then he started to cry because he knew, without even reaching down to find out, that they had amputated his foot. Perhaps his entire leg. He cried about not being able to run down in the car for a pint of half-and-half just before dinner; he cried about not being able to go out to a movie without people trying not to see what had happened to him; he cried about Teresa and what she would have to decide now; he cried about the way clothes would look on him; he cried about the things he would have to say every time; he cried about shoes; and so many other things. He cursed his parents

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and his patrol and the hostiles and the men who had sent him here and he wanted, wished, prayed desperately that any one of them could change places with him. And when he was long finished crying, and simply wanted to die, they came for him, and took him to a hooch where they began questioning him. In the night. The night he carried with him.

They were an ancient people, with a heritage of enslavement, and so for them anguish had less meaning than the thinnest whisper of crimson cloud high above a desert planet of the farthest star in their sky. But they knew the uses to which anguish could be put, and for them there was no evil in doing so: for a people with a heritage of enslavement, evil is a concept of those who forged the shackles, not those who wore them. In the name of freedom, no monstrousness is too great.

So they tortured Lestig, and he told them what they wanted to know. Every scrap of information he knew. Locations and movements and plans and defenses and the troop strength and the sophistication of armaments and the nature of his mission and rumors he'd picked up and his name and his rank and every serial number he could think of, and the street address of his home in Kansas, and the sequence of his driver's license, and his gas credit card number and the telephone number of Teresa. He told them everything.

But they kept at him. They hung him up on a shoulder-high wooden wall, his arms behind him, circulation cut off, weight pulling the arms from their shoulder sockets, and they beat him across the belly with lengths of bamboo, with shoji sticks. He could not even cry any more. They had given him no food and no water, and he could not manufacture tears. But his breath came in deep, husking spasms from his chest; and one of the interrogators made the mistake of stepping forward to grab Lestig's head by the hair, yanking it up, leaning in close to ask another question; and Lestig—falling, falling—exhaled deeply, struggling to live; and there was that breath, and a terrible thing happened.

When the reconnaissance patrol from the firebase actualized control of the hostile command position, when the Huey choppers dropped into the clearing, they advised Supermart HQ that every hostile but one in the immediate area was dead, that a Marine Lance Corporal named Lestig, Vernon C., 526-90-5416, had been found lying unconscious on the dirt

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

floor of a hooch containing the bodies of nine enemy officers who had died horribly, most peculiarly, sickeningly, you've gotta see what this place looks like, HQ, jesus you ain't gonna believe what it smells like in here, you gotta see what these slopes look like, it musta been some terrible disease that could of done this kinda thing to 'em, the new lieutenant got really sick an' puked and what do you want us to do with the one guy that crawled off into the bushes before *it* got him, his face is melting, and the troops're scared shitless and...

And they pulled the recon group out immediately and sent in the intelligence section, who sealed the area with top security, and they found out from the one with the rotting face—just before he died—that Lestig had talked, and they medivac'd Lestig back to a field hospital and then to Saigon and then to Tokyo and then to San Diego, and they decided to court-martial him for treason and conspiring with the enemy, and the case made the papers big, and the court-martial was held behind closed doors, and after a long time Lestig emerged with an honorable, and they paid him off for the loss of his foot and the blindness, and he went back to the hospital for eleven months and in a way regained his sight, though he had to wear smoked glasses.

And then he went home to Kansas.

Between Syracuse and Garden City, sitting close to the coach window, staring out through the film of roadbed filth, Lestig watched the ghost image of the train he rode superimposed over flatland Kansas slipping past outside.

"Hey, you Corporal Lestig?"

Vernon Lestig refocused his eyes and saw the wraith in the window. He turned and the sandwich butcher with his tray of candy bars, soft drinks, ham&cheeses on white or rye, newspapers suspended from his chest by a strap around the neck, was looking at him.

"No, thanks," Lestig said, refusing the merchandise.

"No, hey, really, aren't you that Corporal Lestig—" He uncurled a newspaper from the roll in the tray and opened it quickly. "Yeah, sure, here you are. See?"

Lestig had seen most of the newspaper coverage, but this was local, Wichita. He fumbled for change. "How much?"

"Ten cents." There was a surprised look on the butcher's face, but it washed down into a smile as he said, understanding it, "You been out of touch in the service, didn't even remember what a paper cost, huh?"

Lestig gave him two nickels

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and turned abruptly to the window, folding the paper back. He read the article. It was a stone. There was a note referring to an editorial, and he turned to that page and read it. People were outraged, it said. Enough secret trials, it said. We must face up to our war crimes, it said. The effrontery of the military and the government, it said. Coddling, even ennobling traitors and killers, it said. He let the newspaper slide out of his hands. It clung to his lap for a moment, then fell apart to the floor.

"I didn't say it before, but they should of shot you, you want *my* opinion!" The butcher said it, going fast, fast through the aisle, coming back the other way, gaining the end of the car and gone. Lestig did not turn around. Even wearing the smoked glasses to protect his damaged eyes, he could see too clearly. He thought about the months of blindness and wondered again what had happened in that hooch and considered how much better off he might be if he were *still* blind.

The Rock Island Line was a mighty good road, the Rock Island Line was the way to go. To go home. The land outside dimmed for him, as things frequently dimmed, as though the repair work to his eyes was only temporary, a reserve generator cut in from time to time to sustain the power-feed to his vision, and dimming as the drain became too deep. Then light seeped back in and he could see again. But there was a mist over his eyes, over the land.

Somewhere else, through another mist, a great beast sat haunch-back, dripping chromatic fire from jeweled hide, nibbling at something soft in its paw, talons extended from around blackmoon pads. Watching, breathing, waiting for Lestig's vision to clear.

He had rented the car in Wichita and driven back the sixty-five miles to Grafton. The Rock Island Line no longer stopped there. Passenger trains were dying in Kansas.

Lestig drove silently. No radio sounds accompanied him. He did not hum, he did not cough, he drove with his eyes straight ahead, not seeing the hills and valleys through which he passed, features of the land that gave the lie to the myth of a totally flat Kansas. He drove like a man who, had he the power of images, thought of himself as a turtle drawn straight to the salt sea.

He paralleled the belt of sand hills on the south side of the Arkansas, turned off Route 96 at Elmer, below Hutchinson, due south onto 17. He had not driven these roads in three

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

years, but then, neither had he swum or ridden a bicycle in all that time. Once learned, there was no forgetting.

Or Teresa.

Or home. No forgetting.

Or the hooch.

Or the smell of it. No forgetting.

He crossed the North Fork at the western tip of Cheney Reservoir and turned west off 17 above Pretty Prairie. He pulled into Grafton just before dusk, the immense running sore of the sun draining off behind the hills. The deserted buildings of the zinc mine—closed now for twelve years—stood against the sky like black fingers of a giant hand opened and raised behind the nearest hill.

He drove once around the town mall, the Soldiers and Sailors Monument and the crumbling band shell its only ornaments. There was an American flag flying at half-mast from the City Hall, And another from the Post Office.

It was getting dark. He turned on his headlights. The mist over his eyes was strangely reassuring, as if it separated him from a land at once familiar and alien.

The stores on Fitch Street were closed, but the Utopia Theater's marquee was flashing, and a small crowd was gathered waiting for the ticket booth to open. He slowed to see if he recognized anyone, and people stared back at him. A teen-aged boy he didn't know pointed and then turned to his friends. In the rearview mirror Lestig saw two of them leave the queue and head for the candy shop beside the movie house. He drove through the business section and headed for his home.

He stepped on the headlight brightener, but it did little to dissipate the dimness through which he marked his progress. Had he been a man of images, he might have fantasized that he now saw the world through the eyes of some special beast. But he was not a man of images.

The house in which his family had lived for sixteen years was empty.

There was a realtor's FOR SALE sign on the unmowed front lawn. Gramas and buffalo grass were taking over. Someone had taken a chain saw to the oak tree that had grown in the front yard. When it had fallen, the top branches had torn away part of the side porch of the house.

He forced an entrance through the coal chute at the rear of the house, and through the sooty remains of his vision he searched every room, both upstairs and down. It was slow work: he walked with an aluminum crutch.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They had left hurriedly, mother and father and Neola. Coat hangers clumped together in the closets like frightened creatures huddling for comfort. Empty cartons from a market littered the kitchen floor, and in one of them a teacup without a handle lay upside down. The fireplace flue had been left open, and rain had reduced the ashes in the grate to a black paste. Mold grew in an open jar of blackberry preserves left on a kitchen cabinet shelf. There was dust.

He was touching the ripped shade hanging in a living room window when he saw the headlights of the cars turning into the driveway. Three of them pulled in, bumper-to-bumper. Two more slewed in at the curb, their headlights flooding the living room with a dim glow. Doors slammed.

Lestig crutched back and to the side.

Hard-lined shapes moved in front of the headlights, seemed to be grouping, talking. One of them moved away from the pack, and an arm came up, and something shone for a moment in the light; then a Stillson wrench came crashing through the front window in an explosion of glass.

"Lestig, you motherfuckin' bastard, come on out of there!"

He moved awkwardly but silently through the living room, into the kitchen and down the basement stairs. He was careful opening the coal chute window from the bin, and through the narrow slit he saw someone moving out there. They were all around the house. Coal shifted under his foot.

He let the window fall back smoothly and turned to go back upstairs. He didn't want to be trapped in the basement. From upstairs he heard the sounds of windows being smashed.

He took the stairs clumsily, clinging to the banister, his crutch useless, but moved quickly through the house and climbed the stairs to the upper floor. The top porch doorway was in what had been his parents room; he unlocked and opened it. The screen door was hanging off at an angle, leaning against the outer wall by one hinge. He stepped out onto the porch, careful to avoid any places where the falling tree had weakened the structure. He looked down, back flat to the wall, but could see no one. He crutched to the railing, dropped the aluminum prop into the darkness, climbed over and began shinnying down one of the porch posts, clinging tightly with his thighs, as he had when he'd been a small boy, sneaking out to play after he'd been sent to bed.

It happened so quickly, he had no idea, even later, what

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had actually transpired. Before his foot touched the ground, someone grabbed him from behind. He fought to stay on the post, like a monkey on a stick, and even tried to kick out with his good foot; but he was pulled loose from the post and thrown down violently. He tried to roll, but he came up against a mulberry bush. Then he tried to dummy up, fold into a bundle, but a foot caught him in the side, and he fell over onto his back. His smoked glasses fell off, and through the sooty fog he could just make out someone dropping down to sit on his chest, something thick and long being raised above the head of the shape. . .he strained to see. . .strained. . .

And then the shape screamed, and the weapon fell out of the hand, and both hands clawed at the head, and the someone staggered to its feet and stumbled away, crashing through the mulberry bushes, still screaming.

Lestig fumbled around and found his glasses, pushed them onto his face. He was lying on the aluminum crutch. He got to his foot with the aid of the prop, like a skier righting himself after a spill.

He limped away behind the house next door, circled and came up on the empty cars still headed in at the curb, their headlights splashing the house with dirty light. He slid in behind the wheel, saw it was a stick shift and knew that with one foot he could not manage it. He slid out, moved to the second car, saw it was an automatic, and quietly opened the door. He slid behind the wheel and turned the key hard. The car thrummed to life, and a mass of shapes erupted from the side of the house.

But he was gone before they reached the street.

He sat in the darkness, he sat in the sooty fog that obscured his sight, he sat in the stolen car. Outside Teresa's home. Not the house in which she'd lived when he'd left three years ago, but in the house of the man she'd married six months before, when Lestig's name had been first splashed across newspaper front pages.

He had driven to her parents' home, but it had been dark. He could not—or would not—break in to wait, but there had been a note taped to the mailbox advising the mailman to forward all letters addressed to Teresa McCausland, to this house.

He drummed the steering wheel with his fingers. His right leg ached from the fall. His shirt sleeve had been ripped, and his left forearm bore a long shallow gash from the mulberry bush. But it had stopped bleeding.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Finally, he crawled out of the car, dropped his shoulder into the crutch's padded curve, and rolled up to the front door like a man with sea legs.

The white plastic button in the baroque backing was lit by a tiny nameplate bearing the word HOWARD. He pressed the button, and a chime sounded somewhere on the other side of the door.

She answered the door wearing blue denim shorts and a man's white shirt, button-down and frayed; a husband's castoff.

"Vern. . ." her voice cut off the sentence before she could say *oh* or *what are you* or *they said* or *no!*

"Can I come in?"

"Go away, Vern. My husband's—"

A voice from inside called, "Who is it, Terry?"

"Please go away," she whispered.

"I want to know where Mom and Dad and Neola went."

"Terry?"

"I can't talk to you. . .go away!"

"What the hell's going on around here, I *have* to know."

"Terry? Someone there?"

"Good-by, Vern. I'm. . ." She slammed the door and did not say the word *sorry*.

He turned to go. Somewhere great corded muscles flexed, a serpentine throat lifted, talons flashed against the stars. His vision fogged, cleared for a moment, and in that moment rage sluiced through him. He turned back to the door and leaned against the wall and banged on the frame with the crutch.

There was the sound of movement from inside; he heard Teresa arguing, pleading, trying to stop someone from going to answer the noise, but a second later the door flew open, and Gary Howard stood in the doorway, older and thicker across the shoulders and angrier than Lestig had remembered him from senior year in high school, the last time they'd seen each other. The annoyed look of expecting Bible salesman, heart fund solicitor, girl scout cookie dealer, evening doorbell prankster changed into a smirk.

Howard leaned against the jamb, folded his arms across his chest so that the off-tackle pectorals bunched against his Sherwood-green tank top.

"Evening, Vern. When'd you get back?"

Lestig straightened, crutch jammed back into armpit. "I want to talk to Terry."

"Didn't know just when you'd come rolling in, Vern, but we knew you'd show. How was the war, old buddy?"

"You going to let me talk to her?"

"Nothing's stopping her, old

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

buddy. My wife is a free agent when it comes to talking to ex-boy friends. My *wife*, that is. You get the word. . .old buddy?"

"*Terry?*" He leaned forward and yelled past Howard.

Gary Howard smiled a ladies'-choice-dance smile and put one hand flat against Lestig's chest. "Don't make a nuisance of yourself, Vern."

"I'm talking to her, Howard. Right now, even if I have to go through you."

Howard straightened, hand still flat against Lestig's chest. "You miserable cowardly son-ofabitch," he said, very gently, and shoved. Lestig flailed backward, the crutch going out from under him, and he tumbled off the front step.

Howard looked down at him, and the president-of-the-senior-class smile vanished. "Don't come back, Vern. The next time I'll punch out your fucking heart."

The door slammed and there were voices inside. High voices, and then a slapping sound.

Lestig crawled to the crutch, and using the wall came erect. He thought of breaking in through the door, but he was Lestig, track. . .once. . .and Howard had been football. Still was. Would be, on Sunday afternoons with the children he'd made on cool Saturday nights in a bed with Teresa.

He went back to the car and sat in the darkness. He didn't know he'd been sitting there for some time, till the shadow moved up to the window and his head came around sharply.

"Vern. . .?"

"You'd better go back in. I don't want to cause you any more trouble."

"He's upstairs doing some sales reports. He got a very nice job as a salesman for Shoop Motors when he got out of the Air Force. We live nice, Vern. He's really very good to me. . .oh, Vern. . .why!? Why'd you *do* it?"

"You'd better go back in."

"I waited, God, you *know* I waited, Vern. But then all that terrible thing happened. . .Vern, why did you *do* it?"

"Come on, Terry. I'm tired, leave me alone."

"The whole town, Vern. They were so ashamed. There were reporters and TV people, they came in and talked to *every*one. Your mother and father, Neola, they couldn't stay here any more. . ."

"Where are they, Terry?"

"They moved away, Vern. Kansas City, I think."

"Oh, Jesus."

"Neola's living closer."

"Where?"

"She doesn't want you to know, Vern. I think she got married. I know she changed her name. . .Lestig isn't such a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

good name around here any more."

"I've got to talk to her, Terry. Please. You've got to tell me where she is."

"I can't Vern. I promised."

"Then call her. Do you have her number? Can you get in touch with her?"

"Yes, I think so. Oh, Vern. . ."

"Call her. Tell her I'll stay here in town till I can talk to her. Tonight. Please, Terry!"

She stood silently. Then said, "All right, Vern. Do you want her to meet you at your house?"

He thought of the hard-lined shapes in the glare of headlamps, and of the thing that had run screaming as he lay beside the mulberry bush. "No. Tell her I'll meet her in the church."

"St. Matthew's?"

"No. The Harvest Baptist."

"But it's closed, it has been for years."

"I know. It closed down before I left. I know a way in. She'll remember. Tell her I'll be waiting."

Light erupted through the front door, and Teresa Howard's face came up as she stared across the roof of the stolen car. She didn't even say goodbye, but her hand touched his face, cool and quick, and she ran back.

Knowing it was time once again to travel, the dragon-breath deathbeast eased sinuously to its feet and began treading down carefully through the fogs of limitless forevers. A soft, expectant purring came from its throat, and its terrible eyes burned with joy.

He was lying full out in one of the pews when the loose boards in the vestry wall creaked, and Lestig knew she had come. He sat up, wiping sleep from his fogged eyes, and replaced the smoked glasses. Somehow, they helped.

She came through the darkness in the aisle in front of the altar, and stopped. "Vernon?"

"I'm here, Sis."

She came toward the pew, but stopped three rows away. "Why did you come back?"

His mouth was dry. He would have liked a beer. "Where else should I have gone?"

"Haven't you made enough trouble for Mom and Dad and me?"

He wanted to say things about his right foot and his eyesight, left somewhere in Southeast Asia. But even the light smear of skin he could see in the darkness told him her face was older, wearier, changed, and he could not do that to her.

"It was terrible, Vernon.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Terrible. They came and talked to us and they wouldn't let us alone. And they set up television cameras and made movies of the house and we couldn't even go out. And when they went away, the people from town came and they were even worse; oh God, Vern, you can't believe what they did. One night they came to break things and they cut down the tree and Dad tried to stop them and they beat him up so bad, Vern. You should have seen him. It would have made you cry, Vern."

And he thought of his foot.

"We went away, Vern. We had to. We hoped—" she stopped.

"You hoped I'd be convicted and shot or sent away."

She said nothing.

He thought of the hooch and the smell.

"Okay, Sis. I understand."

"I'm sorry, Vernon. I'm really sorry, dear. But why did you do this to us? Why?"

He didn't answer for a long time, and finally she came to him, and put her arms around him and kissed his neck, and then she slipped away in the darkness, and the wall boards creaked, and he was alone.

He sat there in the pew, thinking nothing. He stared at the shadows till his eyes played him tricks, and he thought he saw little speckles of light dancing. Then the light glimmers changed and coalesced and turned red, and he seemed to be staring first into a mirror and then into the eyes of some monstrous creature, and his head hurt and his eyes burned. . .

And the church changed, melted, swam before his eyes, and he fought for breath and pulled at his throat, and the church re-formed, and he was in the hooch again; they were questioning him.

He was crawling.

Crawling across a dirt floor, pulling himself forward with his fingers leaving flesh-furrows in the earth, trying to crawl away from them.

"Crawl! Crawl and perhaps we will let you live!"

He crawled and their legs were at his eye level, and he tried to reach up to touch one of them, and they hit him. Again and again. But the pain was not the worst of it. The monkey cage where they kept him boxed for endless days and nights. Too small to stand, too narrow to lie down, open to the rain, open to the insects that came and nested in the raw stump of his leg and laid their eggs, and the itching that sent Lilliputian arrows up into his side, and the light that hung from jury-rigged wires through the trees, the light that never went out, day or night, and no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sleep, and the questions, the endless questions. . .and he crawled. . .God, how he crawled. . .if he could have crawled around the world on both bloody hands and one foot, scouring away the knees of his pants, he would have crawled, just to sleep, just to stop the arrows of pain. . .he would have crawled to the center of the earth and drunk the menstrual blood of the planet. . .for only a time of quiet, a straightening of his legs, a little sleep. . .

Why did you do this to us, why?

Because I'm a human being and I'm weak and no one should be expected to be able to take it. Because I'm a man and not a book of rules that says I have to take it. Because I was in a place without sleep and I didn't want to be there and there was no one to save me. Because I wanted to live.

He heard boards creaking.

He blinked his eyes and sat silently and listened, and there was movement in the church. He reached for his smoked glasses, but they were out of reach, and he reached further, and the crutch slid away from the pew seat and dropped with a crash. Then they were on him.

Whether it was the same bunch, he never knew.

They came for him and vaulted the pews and smashed into him before he could use whatever it was he'd used on the kid at the house, the kid who lay on a table in the city hall, covered with a sheet through which green stains and odd rotting smells oozed.

They jumped him and beat him, and he flailed up through the mass of bodies and was staring directly into a wild-eyed mandrill face, and he *looked* at him.

Looked at him. As the deathbeast struck.

The man screamed, clawed at his face, and his face came away in handfuls, the rotting flesh dripping off his fingers. He fell back, carrying two others with him, and Lestig suddenly remembered what had happened in the hooch, remembered breathing and looking, and here in this house of a God gone away he spun on them, one by one, and he breathed deeply and exhaled in their faces and stared at them across the evil night wasteland of another universe, and they shrieked and died, and he was all alone once more. The others, coming through the vestry wall, having followed Neola, having been telephoned by Gary Howard, who had beaten the information from his wife, the others stopped and turned and ran. . .

So that only Lestig, brother to the basilisk, who was itself

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the servant of a nameless dark one far away, only Lestig was left standing amid the twisted body shapes of things that had been men.

Stood alone, felt the power and the fury pulsing in him, felt his eyes glowing, felt the death that lay on his tongue, deep in his throat, the wind death in his lungs. And knew night had finally fallen.

They had road-blocked the only two exits out of town. Then they took eight-cell battery flashlights and Coleman lanterns and cave-crawling lamps, and some of them who had worked the zinc mine years before, they donned their miner's helmets with the lights on them, and they even wound rags around clubs and dipped them in kerosene and lit them, and they went out searching for the filthy traitor who had killed their sons and husbands and brothers, and not one of them laughed at the scene of crowd lights moving through the town, like something from an old film. A film of hunting the monster. They did not draw the parallel, for had they drawn the parallel, they would still never have laughed.

And they searched through the night, but did not find him. And when the dawn came up and they doused their lamps, and the parking lights replaced headlights on the caravans of cars that ringed the town, they still had not found him. And finally they gathered in the mall, to decide what to do.

And he was there.

He stood on the Soldiers and Sailors Monument high above them, where he had huddled all through the night, at the feet of a World War I doughboy with his arm upraised and a Springfield in his fist. He was there, and the symbolism did not escape them.

"Pull him down!" someone shouted. And they surged toward the marble and bronze monument.

Vernon Lestig stood watching them come toward him and seemed unconcerned at the rifles and clubs and war souvenir Lugers coming toward him.

The first man to scale the plinth was Gary Howard, with the broken-field-cheers-of-the-crowd smile on his face. Lestig's eyes widened behind the smoked glasses, and very casually he removed them, and he *looked* at the big many-toothed car salesman.

The crowd screamed in one voice, and the forward rush was halted as the still-smoking body of Teresa's husband fell back on them, arms flung out wide, torso twisted.

In the rear, they tried to run. He cut them down. The crowd

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stopped. One man tried to raise a revolver to kill him, but he dropped, his face burned away, smoking pustules of ruined flesh where his eyes had been.

They stopped. Frozen in a world of muscles that trembled, of running energy with no place to go.

"I'll show you!" he yelled. "I'll show you what it's like! You want to know, so I'll show you!"

Then he breathed, and men died. Then he looked and others fell. Then he said, very quietly, so that they would hear him, "It's easy, till it happens. You never know, Patriots! You live all the time and you say one thing or another, all your rules about what it takes to be brave, but you never *know*, till that one time when you find out. *I* found out, it's not so easy. Now *you'll* find out."

He pointed to the ground.

"Get down on your knees and crawl, Patriots! Crawl to me and maybe I'll let you live. Get down like animals and crawl on your bellies to me."

There was a shout from the crowd, and the man died.

"*Crawl, I said!* Crawl to me!"

Here and there in the crowd people dropped from sight. At the rear a woman tried to run away and he burned her out and the husk fell; and all around her, within sight of the wisps of smoke from her face, people fell to their knees. Then entire groups dropped; then one whole side of the mob went down. Then they were all on their knees.

"Crawl! Crawl, brave ones, crawl nice my people! Crawl and learn it's better to *live*, any way at all, to stay alive, because you're human! Crawl and you'll understand your slogans are shit, your rules are for others! Crawl for your goddamned lives and you'll understand! *Crawl!*"

And they crawled. They

FREE: 19th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

The subscription coupon on the next page will bring you a free copy of our October 1968 19th Anniversary issue, which is fast becoming a collector's item. It includes stories by Larry Niven, Robert Silverberg, Harlan Ellison, Isaac Asimov, Ron Goulart and Arthur C. Clarke. You may use the coupon to enter a new subscription or to renew or extend your current one. The coupon is backed by this copy, and removal does not affect the text of the surrounding story.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crept forward on hands and knees, across the grass, across cement and mud and the branches of small bushes, across the dirt. They crawled toward him.

And far away, through mists of darkness, the Helmeted-Headed One sat on his throne, high above all, with the basilisk at his feet, and he smiled.

"Crawl, Goddamn you!"

But he did not know the name of the God he served.

"Crawl!"

And in the middle of the mob, a woman who had hung a gold star in her front window, crawled across a .32 Police Positive, and her hand touched it, and she folded her fingers around it, and suddenly she raised up and screamed, "For Kennyyyyy. . .!" and she fired.

The bullet smashed Lestig's collarbone, and he spun sidewise, up against the Yank's puttees, and he tried to regain his stance, but the crutch had fallen, and now the crowd was on its feet and firing. . .and firing. . .

They buried the body in an unmarked grave, and no one talked of it. And far away, on a high throne, tickling the sleek hide of the basilisk that reclined at his feet like a faithful mastiff, even the Armed One did not speak of it. There was no need to speak of it. Lestig was gone, but that was to have been expected.

The weapon had been de-activated; but Mars, the Eternal One, the God Who Never Dies, the Lord of Futures, Warden of the Dark Places, Ever-Potent Scion of Conflict, Master of Men, Mars sat content.

The recruiting had gone well. Power to the people.

Mercury Press, Inc., Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753

Enter my subscription to F&SF, and rush me a free copy of the 19th anniversary issue. I enclose ☐ $8.50 for one year; ☐ $21.00 for three years.

8-2

Please print

Name .....

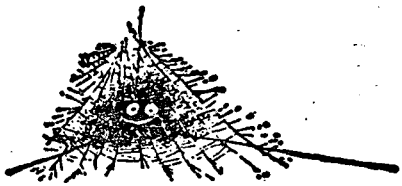
Address .....

City ..... State ..... Zip # .....

Add 50¢ per year for Canada and Mexico; $1.00 for other foreign countries

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE DARK CORNER



ONE OF THE MOST LEGENDary vampire books in English literature, and certainly one of the most baroquely titled, is VARNEY THE VAMPIRE, OR, THE FEAST OF BLOOD, by Thomas Preskett Prest. VARNEY first made his appearance in 1847, and thus stands chronologically midway between Polidori's THE VAMPYRE (1819)—whose Byronic and Byron-based anti-hero, Lord Ruthven, pretty much established the breed as we know it—and Stoker's winner and still champion, DRACULA (1897), who, some scholars maintain, might never have risen from his grave without Varney's example to lead the way. Until recently the book was on the scarce side, there being only three known copies extant, but now, thanks to the Arno Press, you can have it in a boxed edition of three volumes, each one crammed full with tiny type, for a spine-chilling, but not exorbitant, thirty-five dollars. The magnificent blood and thunder illustrations of the

GAHAN WILSON

BOOKS

VARNEY THE VAMPIRE, Thomas Preskett Prest, Arno Press, $35.00

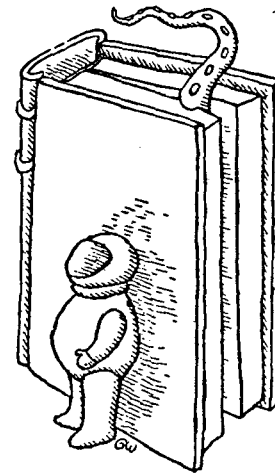
FIVE VICTORIAN GHOST NOVELS, E. F. Bleiler, ed., Dover, $3.50

THE KING IN YELLOW AND OTHER HORROR STORIES, E. F. Bleiler, ed., Dover $2.75

IS THE DEVIL A GENTLEMAN?, Seabury Quinn, Mirage Press, $5.95

SONGS AND SONNETS ATLANTEAN, Donald Sidney-Fryer, Arkham House, $5.00

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE, Colin Wilson, Crown, $5.95



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1847 edition are all there, as is the delightfully ghoulish wrapper of the 1853 penny dreadful printing, and these alone make the book a joy and a delight. T. P. Prest was the king of the authors of the "bloods" of the Victorian era: wild and wooly shockers which were gobbled up enthusiastically by an unrepentant multitude. Two other of his works have attained considerable notoriety, one of commercial cannibalism named SWEENY TODD, THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET, and another of cannibalism, on the grand scale called SAWNEY BEAN, but VARNEY remains his *chef-d'oeuvre*. The style is a rich, unrestrained rhetoric very like that employed by the late W. C. Fields, the plot continuous and unrelenting melodrama; yet, despite the howling mobs and the echoing dungeons, despite the duels and dire threats and hideous grimaces, the pace of the thing throughout, for all its storms and avalanches, is a slow and genteel tread. Over and over the same point will be mulled by divers sets of characters, again and again the action will be brought to a dead halt while the author leisurely spins some side tale which may or may not have anything to do with the story at large, and the paths taken to the various horrid revelations are, one and all, slow and gently winding. A quaint and charming book of considerable historical importance.

A collection of somewhat classier writing from the same epoch is FIVE VICTORIAN GHOST NOVELS, edited with an excellent introduction by E. F. Bleiler, and I flatly recommend it. Very hard to pick a favorite, but I personally enjoyed most "The Uninhabited House," by Mrs. J. H. Riddell. Mr. Bleiler has put together another fine collection for Dover, this one even cheaper at $2.75: THE KING IN YELLOW AND OTHER HORROR STORIES, a gathering of the fantastic tales of the wonderfully erratic Robert. W. Chambers. If, by some awful mischance, you have not read the weird stories connected with the KING, you now have a chance to correct your unfortunate condition, and if you think you've read all the Chambers stuff worth reading, Mr. Bleiler may have a surprise or two for you, as he did for me.

Seabury Quinn, just before his death, put together an anthology of his stories that has recently been published by Mirage Press. If I understand what he was up to, Mr. Quinn was getting together those tales he loved which have not yet

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

received a safe berth between hard covers, as quite a few of his better works are not included. However, IS THE DEVIL A GENTLEMAN? is an excellent demonstration of the talents of the most regularly appearing author in the history of the late *Weird Tales Magazines*. Myself, I have always preferred the stories involving his psychic detective deGrandin, feeling he was really more at home in that area, but it is way past time a collection of his other works be put together, and the publishers are to be congratulated for doing it. Among the titles more likely to ring a bell in the readers' memories are "Uncanonized," "Glamour" and "Bon Voyage, Michelle."

SONGS AND SONNETS ATLANTEAN purports to be a collection of Atlantean poems translated first into French by Michel de Labretagne, thence into our own tongue by a Donald Sidney-Fryer, the whole with copious notes and an introduction by Dr. I. M. Andor. Those with a suspicious turn of mind, and I certainly hope in this day and age you have a suspicious turn of mind, will soon firmly suspect that the whole thing is actually the work of one man, namely that of the Donald Fryer mentioned above. If it is, and there are firm grounds for believing it is, it is work he can well be proud of, for he has managed in his slim book, slim only in physical size, to evoke an Atlantis which is both haunting and astonishingly solid. Mr. Fryer is a profound student of Clark Ashton Smith (he edited Smith's last two collections for Arkham House and will do the same for the forthcoming SELECTED POEMS), and the influence shows, but he is very much his own poet, and he structures and plays with a surety and deftness which is remarkable. SONGS AND SONNETS ATLANTEAN marks the first general visibility of a fine and most welcome new talent.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE is a new Lovecraftian novel by Colin Wilson, and is by all odds his most successful experiment in the area so far. It is fascinating to see what happens when a mind like Wilson's takes off from H.P.L's basic premises and ground rules (and he follows the latter with scrupulous care), not only because Wilson's mind is a most interesting mechanism in itself, but also because of its contrasts with that of Lovecraft's. Both men are dealing with the basic concept that mankind is in the presence of a race of creatures possessing nearly limitless powers, that mankind will

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

probably be destroyed by these creatures when they deign to do it, and that the universe at large really couldn't care less about the whole matter. Reservations on this last from Wilson's point of view. Lovecraft's reaction to it all was one of pity, combined with ironic amusement at mankind's plight, and more of the same for the creatures, but that mixed with awe and excited interest at the creatures' larger abilities and insights. He was obviously impressed by the enormous powers implied by the existence of the creatures, the ideas of entities with minds so vast clearly thrilled him, but he saw mankind strictly as a spectator, never as a participant, in personal hugeness. Wilson, on the other hand, sees a clear connection between the existence of such superbeings and the possibilities latent in our own minds. His monsters are scary enough, and certainly dangerous as hell, but his humans are not the pathetic, tiny pawns H. P. L. visualized; they are beings who just might, with pluck and luck, meet their erstwhile masters on something like even ground. A very interesting book.

By now you have doubtless heard of the death of August Derleth; if not, I am sorry to be the one to break it to you. The personal debt I feel towards him, for the books he made, for the work he uncovered, for the productions of the authors he helped and encouraged, is past expressing. He was a good man, a talented man, and he worked hard for what he believed in. I can't say how much I will miss the knowing he's around.

The critics critic

I feel that I must draw attention to the review by Alexei and Cory Panshin in the March issue of F&SF since it contains so many errors—in fact there are so few true statements that this reader has the uneasy sensation that the Panshins are living in a different time stream. In addition, all of the books reviewed are anthologies, and the Panshins state quite clearly that all the editors are wrong in their choice of stories. Implying that the Panshin taste in story is the only correct one and superior to that of the other editors. Since I edited two of these anthologies, one of them, BEST SF: 1970, with the aid of Brian Aldiss, I must respond to these irresponsible allegations.

First the matter of truth. The Panshins say, "Each (anthology) is ordered around a premise. Premises are a way that an editor who doesn't know why people read SF can give readers a formal excuse for the existence of his book." I shall ignore the gratuitous insult here (the editors don't know why their books are read) and go to the 'factual' bolstering of the argument. "In each case the premise is written large on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the book jacket." Good God! Panshin has been around the fringes of publishing long enough to know that jacket copy is written by faceless cretins chained in the bowels of publishing houses and their writing usually has no relation to the contents of the book. This is true of both my books. "The best SF stories of the year from the best SF magazines in the world." The 'best' is from the title, they could not go wrong there, but most of the stories are from *books* as I state clearly in my introduction. Now what about "13 SF greats present their favorite stories." Again, in my introduction, I state that this volume is an attempt to show the writing being done on the frontiers of SF, and I have asked the most prominent practitioners of this new kind of SF to pick a representative story and tell something about it.

It would take too long to list all Panshin's errors, such as the 'fact' that John Campbell lost his audience because of guessing wrong about what his audience wanted. Campbell knew *just* what his readers wanted and the sales of ASF always led every magazine in the field under his guidance, increasing steadily. However, I must protest the Panshin inclusion of the anecdote about my withdrawing all my own writing from contention for the SFWA Nebula Award. First he gets my reasons wrong although I outlined them clearly; I withdrew because I differed with the method of selection, not because of superior editorial judgement as he states. Secondly he untruthfully uses my feelings about the *Nebula* to bolster his argument about the *Hugo* award, which is a quick bit of footwork. Thirdly, he has ignored the fact that my words were a private statement to other writers about our award, were not for public knowledge, and were printed in our journal, FORUM, which is copyrighted for this reason and specifically states that *nothing* is to be reprinted. Panshin irresponsibility stumbles over into the illegal.

That for the factual errors—what of content? Almost negligible. Panshin says quite simply that he knows what good science fiction should be, all the other editors don't, therefore we are wrong and he is right. Brian Aldiss examines this argument far better than I can. When he read the Panshin reviews he wrote; "Panshin tries to continue the New Wave versus Old battle, which is a closed issue now. The equation he tries to set up is surely wrong: that Old Wave was positive, New Wave negative, and New Wave is bad because it is negative like mainstream or 'mimetic' fiction, as he prefers to call it. Is there a much more positive and optimistic novel than Spinrad's BUG JACK BARON? And is there a more pessimistic lot of books than GULLIVER'S TRAVELS, Stapledon's LAST AND FIRST MEN and STAR MAKER, Clarke's CHILDHOOD'S END, or Poul Anderson's novels where the Earth is destroyed in space warfare? His distinction just does not stand up. You see what he likes about THE HUGO WINNERS is that most of the stories take place far away from the here and now. It's escapist literature in other words, and not what he claims to prefer—'. . .a literature that steps outside the limitations of the present moment and considers alternatives.'

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Hugo Winners *aren't* giving us that; they're giving us a dream life. And while nobody objects to that, why can't there be other types of SF that do actually consider present-day alternatives (as does CAMP CONCENTRATION) (or Aldiss's BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD—HH) without having Panshin sneer at them? Again he is confusing what is popular with what is good, and appears unable to tell the difference."

Our only conclusion then must be that Panshin seeks attention as an *enfant terrible* of science fiction criticism through false quotations, false statements, copyright infringement and insult. I hope that he will retire from this field, where only talent and taste count, until he acquires at least a measurable amount of each.

—HARRY HARRISON

Panshin replies

Dear Harry,

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry that we didn't like your anthologies and got you mad.

I'm sorry that we told the world that you won't have anything to do with the Nebula Awards. We didn't realize that you wished your decision kept secret. We didn't reprint what you said, but merely reported that you had said it. If that was stepping over the bounds of propriety, we are truly sorry. But Harry, contrary to what you say above, you did make a point of objecting that none of the Nebula Awards had ever coincided with your previously chosen Best of the Year. (Compare the record of Wollheim and Carr who have had better luck.) And Harry, it is also true that none of the Hugo Awards have ever coincided with your Best of the Year, either.

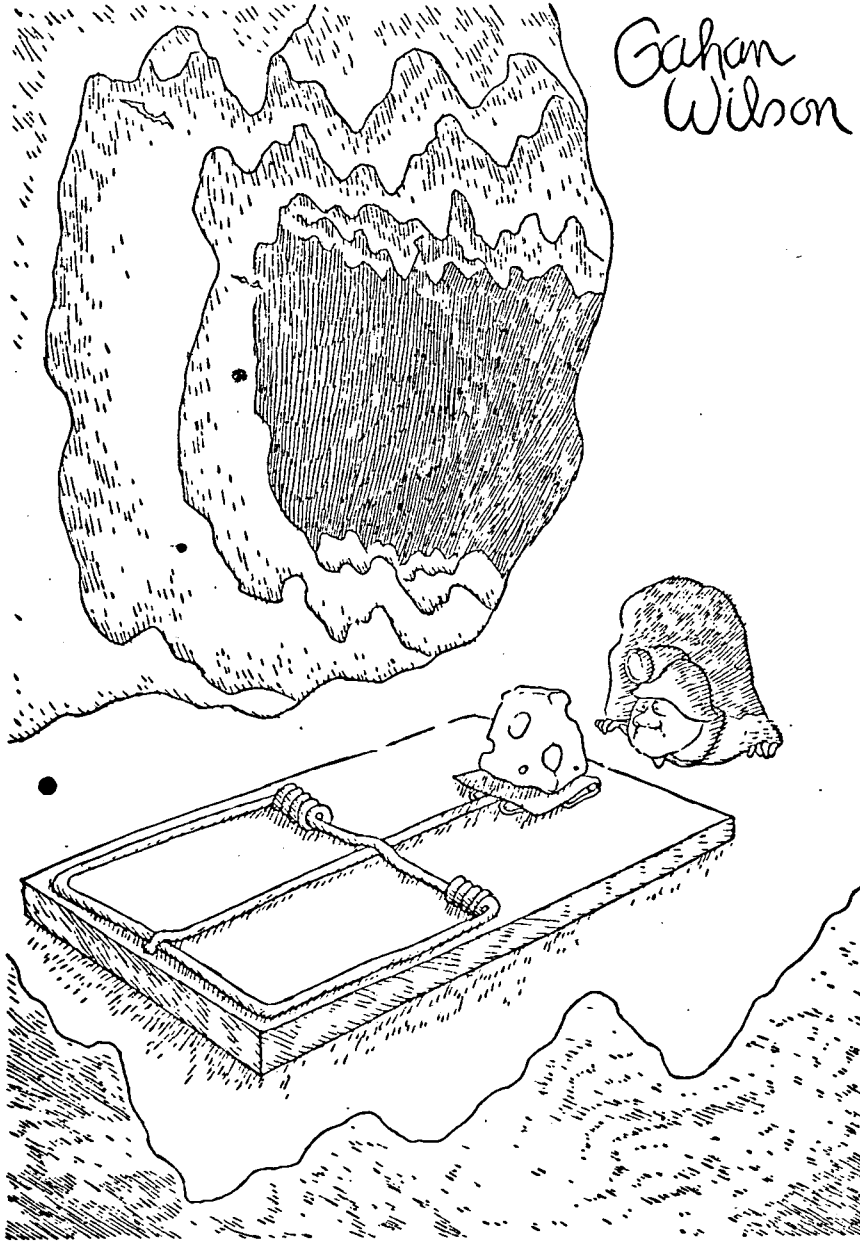
I also regret that after the second paragraph of your letter you drop Cory from consideration and blame all on me. Women's Liberation will not like you for that. Or Brian Aldiss, who makes the same mistake. Whatever errors of taste and talent are present are shared by both of us.

I wish that we could guarantee in the future that we will like what you like, like what you edit and like what you write. But we may not, and I hope you won't ask us to retire if we don't. The rules of the game are that writers write and editors edit, and that critics then call them as they see them. No one can ask of a critic that he always agree, only that he use his best judgment and give his reasons. This we did, and will do again. As we would expect that you and Aldiss will do if you like or, more probably, dislike some book that Cory and I write or edit. Between your writing and editing and our criticism, and our writing and editing and your criticism, we may eventually arrive somewhere.

Finally, Harry, the point of our column was that nobody has ever been able to state clearly why people do read sf. In light of the stories included in five anthologies, we attempted to answer the question. I think that is responsibility, not the irresponsibility you initially charge us with. So please, tell us if you can, what is the special quality that people find in science fiction and nowhere else? As we said in beginning our column, it is a question that the writers, editors and critics of science fiction need to answer.

—ALEXEI PANSHIN

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

No literature of any period is complete without a body of parody, and now that sf is so respectable and the works of its masters in such great demand, it's time, we feel, to look around for some master parodists. We've been set well on our way by John Sladek, who takes on Heinlein (below) and Asimov and Bradbury (upcoming). Where we go from there is up to Mr. Sladek and others in the field. Meanwhile, have fun with Jeremiah Lashard, chess Grand Master, world-renowned oenologist, Olympic medal winner, frisbee expert and astronaut.

Engineer To The Gods

by R*B*RT H**NL**N

JEREMIAH LASHARD HAD A string of letters behind his name as long as his arm, which was itself exceptionally long. Since his days as boxing champion of MIT, this misanthrope hadn't particularly felt the need of asking favors of anyone. No one had helped him become a chess Grand Master, a world-renowned oenologist, an Olympic medal winner, frisbee expert, and astronaut. No one had given him a hand with his hit plays and best-selling novels. No one helped discover "light water," name a new family of spider, invent the Lashard bearing, or create "Lashard's Law" of capital gains.

Lashard lived in seclusion on Thunder Crag, though by no means alone. Today he sat on the veranda at his specially built typewriter, pounding out a pulp science fiction story, while simultaneously dictating a botanical paper to his butler.

Jerry Lashard's butler was an attractive young woman, as were all his servants. It saved time.

He paused to sample his highball, a secret mixture in which a single honeybee floated like a cherry. Over the rim of his glass he studied the young woman climbing the path to his house. Lashard approved of the way the twisting path dealt with her curves.

"Hello," she called.

"Baby, if you're a reporter, you've had a long climb for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nothing. Take my advice, go back to town and make up a story of your own. It's the only interview you'll ever get."

"You big lunk! I'm no reporter, I'm Dr. Janet Cardine, your new assistant!"

"My apologies, Jan. It's just that I've been having a lot of trouble lately, from reporters and—others. Trudy will show you to your room, Valerie will get you a sandwich; Conchita will make you a highball; and while Lana changes your bed linen and Maureen unpacks your bag, Sylvia will bring you back here so I can show you the lab."

Half an hour later he led Jan to the great underground laboratory.

"Wow! You must have hollowed out the whole mountain!"

"I did. Needed more room because this part of the lab is going to be a factory."

"A factory? What on earth for?"

"Long story. Suppose we go for a swim, while I explain. The pool is right in there, and I'll bet Gloria or Velma has a bikini that'll fit you."

The swim enabled him to appraise her other qualifications, while picking her brain about power sources.

"There's solar power, of course," she said, "and wind, running water, tides, any heat source, nuclear reactions, fossil fuels. . .but why do you want to know so much about power?"

"For my factory."

"Yes, but how about the light company? Surely it would be cheaper to have them string power pylons up the mountain side—"

"But the light company has reasons for not wanting me to become a manufacturer. For one thing, they know how I like to save time and effort. I think they're afraid I'll find some way to cut my power needs in half."

"But surely half is better than nothing, Jerry?"

"They have another reason: Some of their biggest customers make fountain pens and ink."

He handed her a peculiar pen. "This can make me one of the richest men in the world, and it can make a lot of people happy—but it also means the ruin of the big pen companies."

She examined it closely. "Looks like any other pen to me—no, wait—there's something funny about the point."

He laughed. "Exactly. And that 'something funny' means three things: One, this pen will write for *six months* without refilling. Two, it will never leak, for the simple reason that it has no liquid ink. Three—I'll show you." He took the pen and a scrap of paper, dived to the bottom of the pool, and came

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

back almost at once, shaking water from the curly black thatch on his bronzed chest. He handed Jan the paper.

"Why—it writes *underwater!*"

"And how! Do you realize what this means? Undersea explorers can make maps, notes and sketches on the spot. Naturalist-divers can sketch new species without surfacing. Underwater demolition, sea mining, oceanic agriculture—it opens up a new universe!"

"You big lug! Kiss me!"

Lashard smiled. "No time to bill and coo now, sister. The light company is playing for keeps. We've got to think of a power source they can't tamper with."

"What about solar power?"

He shook his head. "I put up a set of parabolic reflectors last week. The next day they got a court order, forcing me to either remove them or paint them black. Claimed the reflectors constituted a forest fire hazard. I went to court yesterday. It was no use trying to explain to the judge how it was impossible for parabolic reflectors to cause a forest fire—like most judges and other officials, he still had some doubts about the earth's being round."

"I see what you're up against, you big ape. Any rivers nearby?"

"Just a trickle of drinking water. And the wind is light and gusty, and we're a hundred miles from the ocean, which rules out tide power, too."

"Hmm." She bit her underlip thoughtfully. "We'll need something new, then."

"That's the spirit, kid. You keep thinking about it, while I rig up some robot machinery to run the assembly line. The ink companies managed to infiltrate my union, and the whole shop walked out on me yesterday."

That afternoon he showed her around his mountain empire, as self-contained as a submarine, and introduced her to Adele, Agnes, Amber, Angela, Ava, Beth, Brenda, Billie, and all the rest.

"I can't think of any power sources that won't cost money," Jan said, as they rode the elevator back to the surface. "So it's lucky you're rich."

"That's just it. I'm not." As they settled with drinks in the den, he explained. "The fountain pen companies have combined against me. They've managed to manipulate the stock market so as to all but wipe me out. All I have left is this place, a few government bonds, a couple of rocket research companies, and a share or two in snap-brim hats."

"Did I hear you say *rocket* research? What is this, some

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lame-brained idea of putting men on the Moon?" She began to laugh, but stopped, seeing his expression.

"Better than that, sweetheart. I have reason to believe that the Moon is one great big chunk of U-238. And I want to stake the whole shebang as my claim. But for now, I've got just enough money to get *one* rocket up there, but not back."

"Moon rockets, huh? You big hunk of scientific curiosity, you. Say, I have an idea. Have you ever thought of *using the Moon for power?*"

"You mean mining the U-238 and then—?"

"No, *directly*. Like moonlight reflectors or something."

He began to pace the room as he always did when an idea was brewing. "Naw, the reflectors would have to be bigger than Texas. But, hey, how's this for a neat idea? Why not stick a long pole up there, with a wheel on the end of it, and connect it to a generator?"

She performed some calculations with his special pen. "It might work at that. The Moon is 216,420 miles away at its nearest, and 247,667 miles away at its farthest. That means our pole would need a shock absorber in the middle. That's no problem. But how about bracing? Think of the wind resistance on a pylon that high!"

Lashard grinned, taking her in his arms. "Sweetheart, you may be a good power engineer, but you're one hell of a bad astronomer," he said. "You forget that outer space is airless—there is *no wind in space*. So nix on the braces, my brainchild."

Jan frowned. "One more thing—this I do know about—it'll be duck soup to generate power at the Moon end of the pole, but just how are we supposed to get the power back to Earth? Without going into details, it just isn't possible to transmit that much power over a quarter of a million miles. Wires are no good, and neither is radio transmission. I'll have to think of some other way."

Lashard looked grim. "I hope you think of it by Thursday, kiddo. That's the day I promised to deliver a hundred thousand underwater pens to the Navy. If I miss that contract, we're finished. And I have a feeling the light company is going to try to make sure I miss."

"How will we get the pole up to the Moon in the first place?"

"The most logical way: we turn an oil rig upside down, and *drill towards the sky*. When it reaches the Moon, we can send up the wheel and generator assembly by rocket.

"As a matter of fact, my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

robots are already laying pipe in space, and the rocket is fueling up over in the other lab. All we need is a way of getting the power back here. Hey! What are you doing with my paperweight?"

Jan had picked up the piece of oil pipe and rapped on it with a pen. It gave off a clear ringing note.

"That's it, buster!" she exclaimed. "This little one-note glockenspiel is the secret of power transmission from the Moon!"

He rubbed his chin. "How does it work?"

"Simple. Every pipe vibrates with a certain frequency, right? Now, if we tune our power to the same frequency, we can 'squeeze' it down the tube like music. You'll have enough to run ten factories!"

"*Music from the spheres*, eh? I like that idea. Come here, beautiful."

An alarm siren screamed, and there was the distant sound of automatic weapon fire. "The light company!" Lashard looked over his bank of TV moniter screens. "Yeah. Over by number four robot machine gun tower. I hope the nerve gas fence will hold 'em off for a few hours."

A deep explosion rattled the cocktail glasses, reminding Conchita to mix some drinks.

Wednesday morning the attack was still going on. Lashard worked on a new best seller, his machine gun propped up next to his desk. He was able to type one of his one-draft novels in less than a day, thanks to a quick mind and a special typewriter equipped with extra verb keys.

He checked his watch and glanced at Jan, who was dozing over a set of equations. "If you want to make any last-minute adjustments to the generator," he said, "better do 'em now. The robot crew are loading it on board the rocket in five minutes, and blast-off is in an hour."

"An hour! Oh, no! Jerry, we just can't make it. I'll have to rebuild the generator, almost, and it'll take at least a day."

He groaned. "Trust a dame not to make up her mind until the last minute. Now what?" He paced the floor like a caged thing. Suddenly he stopped and smacked his fist into his palm. "It might work, at that! Get all the parts and tools you need together, keed. We're going to the Moon!"

"But, Jerry, you said there wasn't any way of getting back!"

"There wasn't—until we put the pole up. I've fixed steps and handgrips all along it, and even a couple of rest stops, with hamburger stands and powder

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rooms. Later on, when this pole gets popular, we can have amusements and stores, bargain basements and restaurants and baseball stadiums—a complete vertical city from Earth to Moon. But, hey, get me, jawing like this! Jump into your spacesuit, kitten. We're going bye-bye Moonside!"

As the last of the underwater pens was loaded onto a Navy truck, the supply officer wrote out a check and handed it to Lashard.

"Thanks for coming through on time, Dr. Lashard. These pens will help keep our fleet the toughest in the world!"

"One million dollars!" Lashard showed the check to Jan. "Not bad for three days' work, eh, kiddo?"

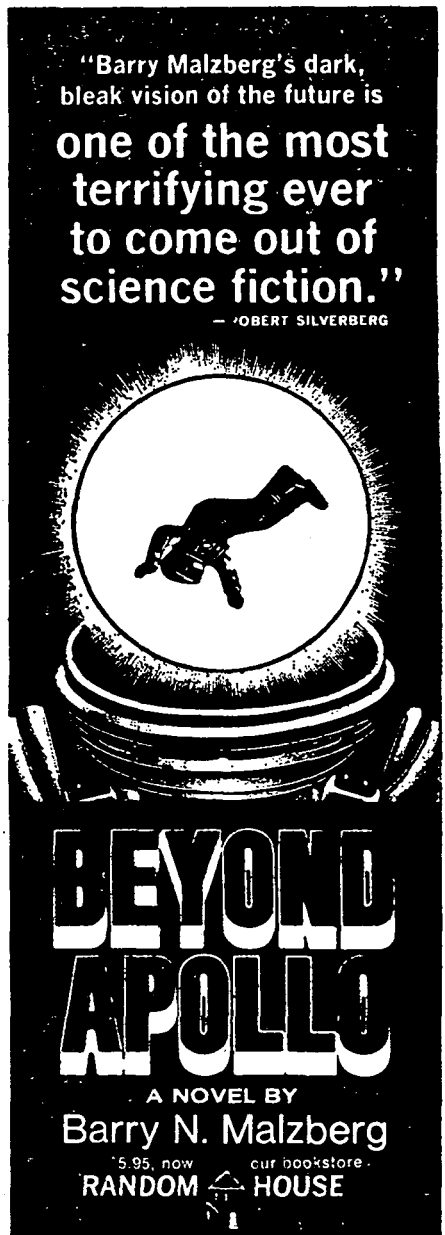
"What are you going to spend it on?"

He took off her glasses and kissed her. "Two bucks of it goes for a marriage license, baby. Howdya like that?"

"Holy Toledo!"

They were sitting pretty.

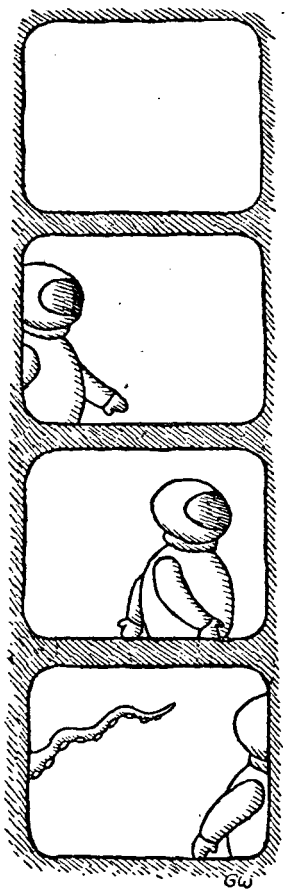
—JOHN SLADEK


"Barry Malzberg's dark, bleak vision of the future is
one of the most terrifying ever to come out of science fiction."
— ROBERT SILVERBERG
BEYOND APOLLO
A NOVEL BY
Barry N. Malzberg
$5.95, now
cur bookstore
RANDOM HOUSE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BAIRD SEARLES

FILMS



Candy Coated Robots

Silent Running (Universal) is one of those films with such a good heart beneath its handsome exterior that I feel as mean saying negative things about it as I would feel about assaulting Lillian Gish. But I'm afraid that I do have my doubts.

It is 2008 and the Earth is utterly homogenized; everything is totally stable—temperature, economy, inhabitants—everything. One of the casualties of this neutral Nirvana is the Earth's forests, the remnants of which are preserved in huge greenhouses on ships in orbit somewhere around Saturn (why this curious form of conservation is never explained). When the order comes to jettison and explode the forests, one of the crewmen on one of the ships turns out to be the last of the big time ecology freaks and goes beserk, killing his three crewmates and taking the ship on a wild ride through the rings of Saturn with the help of three "drones," tubby, programmed robots dubbed Huey, Dewey and Louie by our hero, who himself bears the unbearably Significant name of Freeman Lowell.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Louie is almost immediately lost on an EVA; the remainder of the film is primarily devoted to the odd trio of Huey, Dewey and Lowell attempting to maintain the forests and keep the ship—er—shipshape, as it were. It would be as unfair to say how it all ends as spilling "The butler did it" with a murder mystery, so I won't.

But about those doubts. They center around the drones, who are the main characters of the film along with Lowell (Bruce Dern) once the other crew members are eliminated. The robots are convincing to look at, boxy creatures clumping about purposefully on short legs (their mobility comes from their being activated by bilateral amputee actors inside them). But they are characterized as "cute" in many of their actions—gazing sadly at the remains of their comrade, nudging each other slyly, playing poker—and it almost does in the film. The cuddly, literal-minded robot was fine in *Forbidden Planet*, which was a light-hearted adventure film, but "comic relief" in serious films went out a long time ago, and I'm sorry they felt it necessary for this one. Apparently science fiction is still considered too heavy for the average audience without some sort of humorous or humanizing touches.

I could pick some more nits, like the crisis of the dying trees, resolved after days of agonizing research as due the fact that they're not getting enough light—even I, renowned for a black thumb, would ask that about a dying potted palm, especially if it and I were out near Saturn. And I could have done without Joan Baez' shrill soprano giving out ecology type folk songs on the sound track.

Despite all this grousing, though, I recommend seeing *Silent Running*, if only for the *deja vu* (director Douglas Trumbull did the effects on *2001*) of the great ships, this time decorated with flora-filled domes, moving ponderously, silently, majestically through space. It still catches the heart.

Things to Come Department . . .In addition to the upcoming *Rabbits*, stand warned of two more films slated for production: *Frogs* and *Roach*. What hath Willard wrought?. . .In preparation is an animated musical version of *Charlotte's Web*, a classic children's fantasy that a great many people seem to like better than I do.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Here is the conclusion to Jack Vance's new novel. If you missed part one, the author's synopsis will bring you quickly up to date. THE ASUTRA, the final novel of Mr. Vance's Durdane trilogy, will be published here early next year.

The Brave Free Men

(2nd of 2 parts)

by JACK VANCE

SYNOPSIS FOR PART ONE: The world Durdane lies beyond that shimmering wall of stars known as the Schiafarilla Cluster. The inhabitants of Durdane have long lost contact with the Earth worlds and are only dimly aware that other human places exist.

Durdane is a large planet. The great world-mass Caraz is populated only by a few barbarians. To the east of Caraz is a second smaller continent, with Shant to the north, Palasedra to the south and the Great Salt Bog between.

Shant, the most civilized region of Durdane, is a confederacy of 62 cantons governed by a single man, the Anome (or the Faceless Man), whose identity is known only to himself. Every citizen of Shant wears a torc containing a strand of dexax, which the Anome, should he so choose, can explode by means of a coded radio pulse. This capability, together with his anonymity, provides the Anome his unquestioned authority.

At the center of Shant are the Hwan Mountains, the lair of a mysterious half-human race known as Roguskhoi. Periodically they drive forth to ravage, to kill and to capture. Their lust is insatiable; they impregnate women of every age with infinitesimal homunculi, who quickly grow into Roguskhoi imps, a dozen or more, which are given birth to augment the Roguskhoi horde.

The Roguskhoi are a source of both terror and agonized perplexity. Where is their origin? Who introduced them into Shant and for what purpose? A large number of folk suspect Palasedra, but no significant evidence supports this view. Other questions, as mysterious as the rest: why does the Anome ignore the horrid creatures? Why does he temporize? Why has he failed to take decisive action against the Roguskhoi?

Gastel Etzwane, a musician, and Ifness, a Fellow of the Historical Institute of Earth, attempt to answer these questions. Through a series of fateful events Etzwane becomes, in effect, Anome, and imprisons his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

predecessor, Sajarano of Sershan. Ifness, however, has disregarded the first law of the Institute: a Fellow may not interfere in the affairs of the world he studies. Ifness is required to leave Durdane, and Etzwane is left to cope with a staggering load of responsibilities.

Etzwane questions Sajarano at length; Sajarano refuses to justify his peculiar apathy, except to urge that the Roguskhoi are in actuality no great threat, that the exertion required to defeat them is incommensurate with the benefits to be derived from the abatement of their raids.

Etzwane rejects such arguments as unreal, and issues a war-call, mobilizing the cantons of Shant. But, as Sajarano prophesied, the folk of Shant respond only sluggishly; too long they have relied upon the omnipotence of the Anome.

The Chief Discriminator (i.e., the director of the secret police) is Aun Sharah, an urbane and clever man whom Etzwane distrusts. Etzwane removes Aun Sharah from his sensitive post, and makes him Director of Materials Procurement, much to Aun Sharah's distaste.

Shant is deficient in metal. The technists can fabricate neither energy-weapons nor propulsion machinery. Travel is accomplished afoot, by pacer-drawn carriage, or by means of the balloons which sail the length and breadth of Shant, linked to dollies running in slots. At one time Etzwane served as indentured worker for the balloonway, but escaped Angwin Junction with the unwitting assistance of a certain Jerd Finnerack. Etzwane remembers Finnerack as a person staunch and dependable, and learns to his dismay that Finnerack has been sent to the dreaded Camp Three for recalcitrants, in Canton Glaiy.

Etzwane rescues Jerd Finnerack only to find that the good-natured lad of Angwin Junction has become a gaunt embittered man, nursing a consuming rancor against the system which brought him so much suffering. Finnerack grudgingly agrees to act as Etzwane's lieutenant. Etzwane also recruits into his service Dystar, a distinguished musician and Mialambre: Octagon, a rather pedantic jurist. Dystar is Etzwane's father, though Dystar knows nothing of the relationship.

Inexplicable circumstances occur. Sajarano of Sershan disappears from his palace; his corpse is discovered in a nearby forest. Etzwane is bewildered and oppressed by the fact of Sajarano's death. Meanwhile the Roguskhoi depredations are ever more destructive. The new militia engages them in battle but lacking adequate weapons suffers a series of demoralizing defeats.

At Garwiy however the technists have contrived a novel energy-gun, which hopefully will turn the tide of battle against the Roguskhoi. Etzwane makes a difficult but necessary decision: production of torcs must be interrupted in order to expedite the construction of the new weapons, a decision of far-reaching scope which disturbs the more conservative members of his staff. But before the weapons can be supplied in adequate quantities, the Roguskhoi launch massive attacks upon the cantons of the north coast.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER 8

IN THE PLUM-COLORED GARWIY evening Etzwane and Finnerack made their way under colored lights to Fontenay's Inn. At a back table Frolitz and the troupe ate a supper of broad beans and cheese, which Etzwane and Finnerack joined.

Frolitz was in a sour mood. "Gastel Etzwane's hands are tired and worn. Since his outside activities are more important than the welfare of the troupe, I will not require him to play an instrument. If he wishes, he may rattle the histels, or snap his fingers from time to time."

Etzwane held his tongue. After the meal when the troupe brought forth their instruments, Etzwane joined them on the stand. Frolitz struck a pose of astonishment. "What is this? The grand Gastel Etzwane favors us with his presence? We are profoundly grateful. Would you be so kind as to take up your woodhorn? Tonight I work the khitan."

Etzwane blew in the familiar old mouth-cup, fingered the silver buttons of which he had once been so proud. . .Strange how differently he felt! The hands were his own; his fingers moved of their own accord up and down the buttons, but the vantage was higher, the perspectives were longer; and he played with an almost imperceptible elongation of tension at the beat.

At the intermission Frolitz came back to the troupe in a state of excitement. "Notice the man in the far corner—can you guess who sits there in silence, without his instrument? It is the druithine Dystar!" The troupe peered at the austere silhouette, each man wondering how his music had sounded in the mind of the great druithine. Frolitz said, "I asked what he did here; he said he had come at the will of the Anome. I asked, would he play music with the troupe? He said, yes, it would be his pleasure, that our work had brought the mood upon him. So now he joins us. Etzwane, to the gastaing; I play woodhorn."

Fordyce, standing next to Etzwane muttered, "At last, you play beside your father. And still he does not know?"

"He does not know." Etzwane took up the gastaing: an instrument of deeper tone than the khitan, with a plangent resonance which must remain under the control of the damping sleeve if the harmony were not to be overwhelmed. Unlike many musicians, Etzwane enjoyed the gastaing and the subtleties to be achieved by expert tilting and sliding of the sleeve.

The troupe took up their instruments and stood waiting on the bandstand: the conventional respect due a musician of Dystar's quality. Frolitz left the stand, went to speak to Dystar; the two returned. Dystar bowed to the musicians, and his gaze rested a thoughtful instant on Etzwane. He took Frolitz's khitan, struck a chord, bent the neck, tested the scratch-box. In accordance with his prerogatives, he started a tune, a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pleasant melody, deceptively simple.

Frolitz and Mielke on the clarion played ground notes, careful to stay harmonically aside, with the guizol and gastaing striking unobtrusive accents. . .The music proceeded; the first tune came to an end: an exercise in which each participant explored the musical surroundings. . .Dystar relaxed his position and sipped from the beaker of wine which had been placed beside him. He nodded to Frolitz, who now in his turn blew a theme into the mouth-cup of his woodhorn—a gasping rasping sardonic statement foreign to the fluid clarity of the instrument, which Dystar emphasized with harsh slow strokes of the scratch-box, and the music was off and away: a polyphony melancholy and deliberate, in which every instrument of the troupe could clearly be heard. Dystar played calmly, his invention every instant opening new perspectives into the music. . .The melody broke and faltered, in a manner anticipated by all; Dystar struck out an astounding exercise, starting in the upper register, working down through a perplexing combination of chords, with only an occasional resonance of the gastaing for support; down through upper-middle and lower-middle registers, backwards and forwards, like a falling leaf; into the lower tones, to finish with a guttural elbow at the scratch-box. On the woodhorn Frolitz blew a quaver a minor interval below, which dwindled and died into the resonance of the gastaing.

As convention demanded, Dystar now gave up his instrument and went to a table at the side of the room. The troupe sat quietly for a moment or two. Frolitz considered. With a malicious twitch of the lips he handed the khitan to Etzwane. "We now play something slow and quiet—what is that night piece of Old Morningshore? *Zitrinilla*. . .Third mode. Careful, all, with the breakoff from the second strain. Etzwane: the time and the statement. . ."

Etzwane crooked the khitan, adjusted the scratch-box. The mischievous Frolitz, he well knew, had thrust him into a position from which any sensible man must recoil: the playing of khitan after one of Dystar's most brilliant improvisations. Etzwane paused a moment to think his way through the tune. He struck a chord, and played the statement at a somewhat slower tempo than usual.

The tune proceeded, wistful and melancholy, and came to its end. Frolitz blew a phrase to signal a variation at a different rhythm. Etzwane found himself playing alone, the condition he had been hoping to avoid: he must now set himself up for measure against Dystar. . .He played slow chords quickly damped, creating a pattern of sound and silence, which became interesting to him, and which he restated in an inversion. Resisting the temptation to embellish, he played a spare stately music. The troupe supplied ground notes, which presently became a broad theme, swelling

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

up like a wave over the khit.. then subsiding. Etzwane played a ..t of clanging disharmonic chords ..d a soft resolution; the music ended. Dystar rose to his feet and signaled all to his table. "Beyond question," said Dystar, "here is the first troupe of Shant. All are strong, all use the sensitivity of strength. Gastel Etzwane plays as I at his age could only have hoped to play; he has known much experience of life."

"He is an obstinate man," said Frolitz. "With an important future as a Pink-Black-Azure-Deep Greener, he meddles instead with Aesthetes and eirmelraths and other matters which do not concern him. My counsel goes for nought."

Etzwane said in a mild voice: "Frolitz refers to the war against the Roguskhoi, which occupies something of my attention."

Frolitz threw wide his arms in a gesture of vindication. "From his own mouth you have heard the words."

Dystar nodded gravely. "You have cause for concern." He turned to Etzwane. "At Maschein I spoke to you and your friend who sits yonder. Immediately thereafter I received the Anome's command to journey here. Are these events related?"

Frolitz looked accusingly at Etzwane. "Dystar too? Must every musician in Shant go forth against the savages before you are appeased? We strike them with our tringolets, pelt them with guizols. . .The scheme is inept." Signaling his troupe he stalked back to the stand.

"Frolitz's remarks are irrelevant," said Etzwane. "I am indeed involved against the Roguskhoi, but on this basis—" He explained his situation in the same terms he had used with Finnerack. "I need support from the wisest persons of Shant, and for this reason I requested that you come here."

Dystar seemed mildly amused rather than startled or awed. "So then: I am here."

A figure loomed over the table. Etzwane looked up into the bleak visage of Mialambre:Octagon. "I am puzzled by your policies," stated Mialambre. "You ask that I meet you at a tavern to discuss matters of policy; I find you drinking liquors and consorting with the tavern musicians. Is the whole affair a hoax?"

"By no means," said Etzwane. "This is Dystar, an eminent druithine, and like yourself a man of wisdom. Dystar, before you stands Mialambre:Octagon, no musician, but a jurist and a philosopher, whose assistance I have also solicited."

Mialambre seated himself somewhat stiffly. Etzwane glanced from one to the other: Dystar detached and self-contained, an observer rather than a participant; Mialambre astute, exacting, a person relating each fact of existence to every other fact by a system based on the ethos of Wale. The two, thought Etzwane, had nothing in common but integrity; each would find the other incomprehensible; yet if one became Anome, he would rule the other. Which?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Either?. . .Etzwane, looking over his shoulder, beckoned to Finnerack, who had been standing somewhat aloofly by the wall.

Finnerack had changed to a somber garment of black twill, tight at wrists and ankles. Without change of expression he came to the table. "Here," said Etzwane, "for all his gloom is a man of probity and competence. His name is Jerd Finnerack; he tends to energetic action. We are a disparate group, but our problems run on several levels, and require disparate talents."

"This is all very well, or so I suppose," said Mialambre. "Still, I find the situation irregular and our surroundings incongruous. You deal with all of Shant rather more informally than the elders control the business of our village."

"Why not?" asked Etzwane. "The government of Shant has been and is a single man, the Anome; what could be less formal than this? The government travels with the Anome; if he sat here tonight, here would be the government."

"The system is flexible," Mialambre agreed. "How it functions in times of stress remains to be seen."

"The system depends upon the men who direct it," said Etzwane, "which is to say ourselves. Much work lays before us. I will tell you what so far has been done: we have mobilized militias in sixty-two cantons."

"Those not now overrun," remarked Finnerack.

"The technists of Garwiy contrive weapons; the folk of Shant at last realize that the Roguskhoi must and will be defeated. On the other side of the coin, the organization to coordinate so much effort simply does not exist. Shant is a sprawling beast with sixty-two arms and no head. The beast is helpless; it struggles and thrashes in sixty-two directions, but is no match for the ahulph which gnaws at its belly."

On the stand Frolitz had taken the troupe into a muted nocturne which he played only when he felt out of sorts.

Mialambre said, "Our deficiencies are real. Two thousand years has brought many changes. Viana Paizaflume fought the Palasedrans with a brave, even ferocious, army. They wore no torcs; discipline must have been a severe problem. Even so, they dealt the Palasedrans terrible blows."

"They were men in those days," said Finnerack. "They lived like men, they fought like men and if necessary died like men. They pursued no 'flexible tactics'."

Mialambre nodded in dour agreement. "We shall not find their like in the Shant of today."

"Yet," mused Etzwane, "they were only men, no more and no less than ourselves."

"Not true," insisted Mialambre. "The men of old were harsh and willful, responsible to no one but themselves. They were therefore self-reliant, and here is the 'more.' The folk today are allowed no such exercises; they trust the justice of the Anome rather than the effect of their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

own force. They are obedient and lawful: here the olden folk were 'less.' So we have lost and so we have gained."

"The gains have no meaning," said Finnerack, "if Roguskhoi destroy Shant."

"This will not come to pass," Etzwane declared. "Our militias must and will strike them back!"

Finnerack uttered his harsh laugh. "How can the militia do this? Can children fight ogres? A single man inhabits Shant: the Anome. He cannot do the fighting; he must order his children forth to battle. The children are fearful; they rely on the single man and the result is preordained. Defeat! disaster! death!"

There was silence except for the slow sad music of the nocturne.

"I suspect that you overstate your case," said Mialambre in a cautious voice. "Surely Shant cannot be totally bereft of warriors; somewhere live brave men to protect their homes."

"I met a few," said Finnerack. "Like me, they worked at Camp Three. They had no fear of pain, death or the Faceless Man; what could he do worse than what they knew? Here were warriors! Men without fear of the torc! These men were free; can you believe this? Give me a militia of such brave free men, and I will conquer the Roguskhoi!"

"Unfortunately," said Etzwane, "Camp Three is no more. We can hardly torment men until they lose their fear of death."

"Is there no better way to set a man free?" cried Finnerack in a rough voice. "This instant I can tell you a better way!"

Mialambre was puzzled; Dystar wondered; only Etzwane knew Finnerack's meaning. Beyond question he referred to his torc, which he must regard as the instrument of his suffering.

The group sat quietly, brooding over Finnerack's words. Presently in a voice of idle reflection Etzwane asked, "Suppose the torcs were taken from all your necks: what then?"

Finnerack's face was stony; he deigned no reply.

Dystar said, "Without my torc I would be mad with joy."

Mialambre seemed astounded both by the concept and by Dystar's response. "How can this be? The torc is your representation, the signal of your responsibility to society."

"I recognize no such responsibility," said Dystar. "Responsibility is the debt of people who take. I do not take, I give. Thereafter my responsibility is gone."

"Not so," exclaimed Mialambre. "This is an egotistical fallacy! Every man alive owes a vast debt to millions—to the folk around him who provide a human ambience, to the dead heroes who gave him his thoughts, his language, his music; to the technists who built the spaceships which brought him to Durdane. The past is a precious tapestry; each man is a new thread in the continuing weave; a thread by itself is without meaning or worth."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dystar gave generous acquiescence. "What you say is truth. I am at fault. Nonetheless, my torc is unwelcome; it coerces me to the life I would prefer to live by my own free will."

"Suppose you were Anome," asked Etzwane. "What would be your policy in this regard?"

"There would be no more torcs. People would live without fear, in freedom."

" 'Freedom'?" cried Mialambre in unaccustomed fervor. "I am as free as is possible! I act as I please, within the lawful scope. Thieves and murderers lack freedom; they may not rob and kill. The honest man's torc is his protection against such 'freedom.' "

Dystar again conceded the jurist his argument. "Still, I was born without a torc. When the Sanhredin guildmaster clamped my neck, a weight came upon my spirit which has never departed."

"The weight is real," said Mialambre: "What is the alternative? Illegality and defiance. How would our laws be enforced? Through a coercive corps? Spies? Prisons? Tortures? Hypnotism? Drugs? Men without restraint are ahulphs. I declare that the flaw is not the torc; it resides in the human disposition which makes the torc necessary."

Finnerack said, "The correctness of your remarks rests upon an assumption."

"Which is?"

"You assume the altruism and good judgment of the Anome."

"True!" declared Mialambre. "For two thousand years we have had this general condition."

"The magnates will agree to this. At Camp Three we thought the reverse; and we are correct, not you. What man of justice could allow a Camp Three to exist?"

Mialambre was not daunted. "Camp Three was a carbuncle upon the private parts: filth under the rug. No system lacks its flaw. The Anome enforces only canton law; he makes no law of his own. The customs of Canton Glaiy are insensitive; perhaps this is why Camp Three was located in Glaiy. Were I Anome, would I enforce new laws upon Glaiy? A dilemma for every thoughtful man."

Etzwane said, "The argument is beside the point; at least temporarily. The Roguskhoi are about to destroy us. There will be no more torcs, no more Anome, no more men, unless we fight with effectiveness. Our performance to date has not been good."

"The Anome is the single free man of Shant," said Finnerack. "As a free man, I too would fight; an army of free men could defeat the Roguskhoi."

Mialambre said, "The idea is unrealistic, in more ways than one. In the first place, the unclamped children are years from manhood."

"Why wait?" demanded Finnerack. "We need only unclamp our warriors."

Mialambre laughed quietly. "It is not possible. Fortunately so. We would have suffered the Hundred

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Years War for nothing. The torcs have kept the peace. The compulsion of the torc is best; I cite you the chaos of Caraz."

"Even though manhood is lost?" demanded Finnerack. "Do you envision an infinite future of halcyon peace? The pendulum must swing. The torcs must be unclamped."

Dystar asked, "How is this to be done?"

Finnerack jerked his thumb toward Etzwane. "An Earthman taught him the sleight. He is a free man; he can do as he likes."

"Gastel Etzwane," said Dystar, "take then this torc from my neck."

The decision came to Etzwane's mind by an indirect and emotional process. "I will remove your torcs. You shall be free men like myself. Finnerack will control an army of brave free men. No further children will be clamped by torcs—if only for this reason: the torc makers now supply radios to the new militia."

Mialambre said despondently; "For better or worse, Shant enters a new time of convulsion."

"For better or worse," said Etzwane, "the convulsion is upon us. The force of the Anome is waning; he can no longer control the spasms. Mialambre and Dystar, you must work together. Mialambre, with such staff as you elect, you shall range Shant and correct the worst flaws: the Camp Threes, the Temple Bashons, the indenture brokers, the indenture system itself. You cannot avoid conflict and controversy; these are unavoidable. Dystar, only a great musician could do what I now require of you. Alone, or with such folk as you select, you must range Shant, to tell folk by word and by the force of music of the common heritage, the unity which must come to us, unless the Roguskhoi drive us all out into the Beljamar. The details of these operations—to correct and to unify, to bring justice and common purpose—must be yours to calculate. Now, let us go up to my chambers, where you shall all become free men like myself."

CHAPTER 9

Days passed. Etzwane engaged a suite on the fourth level of the Roseale Hrindiana, on the east side of Corporation Plaza, three minutes walk from the Jurisdictionary. Finnerack moved in with him, but two days later took a somewhat less luxurious suite in the Pagane Towers across the plaza. The pleasures of wealth held no fascination for Finnerack; his meals were spare; he drank no wines or spirits; his wardrobe consisted of four relatively plain garments, each unrelieved black. Frolitz had unceremoniously taken his troupe up into Purple Fan; Mialambre:Octagon had assembled a staff of consultants, though he had not yet overcome all his misgivings in regard to the changes he would be working upon Shant.

Etzwane argued: "Our goal is not uniformity; we quell only those institutions which victimize the helpless: grotesque theologies, in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

denture, the old-houses of Cape. When once the Anome enforced law, in the new times he becomes a source of recourse."

"If torcs are no longer used, the Anome's function changes of necessity," Mialambre noted in a dry voice. "The future is unreadable."

Dystar had gone off by himself, with words to no one.

Mialambre:Octagon or Dystar the druithine? Either could fulfill the office of Anome; both were deficient in the other's strength. . .Etzwane wished that he could make a quick decision and unburden himself; he had no taste for authority.

Meanwhile Finnerack reorganized the Discriminators with brutal zest. The comfortable old routines were shattered; out went the timeservers, including Thiruble Archenway; departments and bureaus were consolidated. The new Intelligence Agency was Finnerack's special interest, a situation which sometimes caused Etzwane misgivings. Consulting with Finnerack in his office, Etzwane studied the spare form, the corded face, the down-drooping mouth, the bright blue eyes, and wondered as to the future. Finnerack now wore no torc; Etzwane's authority extended only so far as Finnerack chose to acknowledge it.

Dashan of Szandales came into the office with a tray of refreshments. Finnerack, suddenly remembering one of his arrangements, put a question to her. "The men I required—they are here?"

"They are here." Dashan's voice was terse. She disliked brisk order.

"Have them marshaled into the back office; we'll be there in five minutes."

Dashan flounced from the room. Etzwane watched her go with a sad half smile. Finnerack would be a hard man to control. To urge him to greater delicacy was time wasted. Etzwane asked, "What men?"

"They are the last of the men on the roster. You have seen all the rest."

Etzwane had almost forgotten Aun Sharah, who in his present post was reassuringly far from the sources of power.

The two went to the back office. Here waited fourteen men: the trackers and spies on Aun Sharah's informal roster. Etzwane walked from man to man, trying to remember the exact contours of the face he had glimpsed through the window of the diligence: a hard straight nose, a square chin, wide flinty eyes.

In front of him stood such a man. Etzwane said, "Your name, if you please?"

"I am Ian Carle."

To the others Etzwane said, "Thank you, I require nothing more." To Carle he said, "Come, if you please, to my office."

He led the way, with Carle and Finnerack walking behind. Finnerack slid shut the door. Etzwane motioned Carle to a divan; Carle silently obeyed.

Etzwane asked, "Have you ever been in this office before?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Carle stared Etzwane eye to eye for five seconds. He said, "I have."

Etzwane said, "I want to learn something of your previous work. My authority to ask questions comes directly from the Anome; I can show you the warrant, should you require assurance. Your own conduct is not in question."

Ian Carle gave an unemotional sign of assent.

"A short time ago," said Etzwane, "you were instructed to meet the balloon *Aramaad* at Garwiy Depot, there identify a certain man—myself as a matter of fact—and follow him to his destination. Is this true?"

Carle paused only two seconds. "This is true."

"Who gave you these instructions?"

Carle spoke in an even voice, "The then Chief Discriminator Aun Sharah."

"Did he provide background or reason for your assignment?"

"None. This was not his habit."

"What were your exact instructions?"

"I was to follow the designated man, observe whomever he met; were I to see the tall white-haired man of uncertain age, I was to abandon Gastel Etzwane and follow the white-haired man. I was naturally to gather all supplementary information.

"What was your report?"

"I informed him that the subject, obviously suspicious, had no difficulty picking me out, and attempted to make physical contact with me, which I avoided."

"What other instructions did Aun Sharah then give you?"

"He told me to station myself near Sershan Palace, to be at all times discreet, to ignore the previous subject, but to watch for the tall white-haired man."

Etzwane flung himself down on the divan and glanced at Finnerack, who stood with arms clasped behind his back, eyes boring into the face of Ian Carle. Etzwane felt puzzlement. The information had been supplied; Aun Sharah's activities had been illuminated. What did Finnerack see or sense that he had missed?

Etzwane asked, "What other report did you make to Aun Sharah?"

"I made no other reports. When I came with my information, Aun Sharah was no longer Chief Discriminator."

"Information?" Etzwane frowned. "What information did you bring on this occasion?"

"It was general in nature. I witnessed a gray-haired man of middle-size leave Sershan Palace, whom I conceived might be the person in question. I followed him to Fontenay's Inn, where I identified him as Frolitz, a musician. I returned up Galias Avenue, passing you and this gentleman near the fountain. As I turned into Middle Way, I encountered a tall white-haired man walking eastward. He hailed a diligence and asked to be taken to the Splendor of Gebractya. I followed as rapidly as possible, but I did not find him."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Since, have you seen either the white-haired man or Aun Sharah?"

"Neither have I seen."

From somewhere, thought Etzwane, Aun Sharah had secured a description of Ifness, in whom he had taken considerable interest. Ifness had returned to Earth; the white-haired man Ian Carle had followed presumably had been an Aesthete.

Etzwane asked, "What garments did the tall white-haired man wear?"

"A gray cloak, a loose gray cap."

These were Ifness' preferred garments. Etzwane asked, "Was he an Aesthete?"

"I think not; he carried himself like a man from an outer canton."

Etzwane tried to remember some particular characteristic by which Ifness could be identified. "Can you describe his face?"

"Not in detail."

"If you see him again, communicate with me at once."

"As you desire." Ian Carle departed.

Finnerack spoke caustically, "There you have Aun Sharah, Director of Material Resources. I say, drown him tonight in the Sualle."

One of Finnerack's worst faults, reflected Etzwane, was intemperance and excessive reaction, which made dealing with him a constant struggle for moderation. "He did only what you and I would have done in his place," said Etzwane shortly. "He gathered information."

"Oh? What of the message to Shirge Hillen at Camp Three?"

"That has not been proved upon him."

"Bah. When I was a boy I worked in my father's currant patch. When I found a weed I pulled it up. I did not look at it or hope that it might become a currant plant. I dealt with the weed at once."

"First you made sure it was a weed," said Etzwane.

Finnerack shrugged and stalked from the room. Dashan of Szandales came into the room, looking back toward Finnerack's departing shape with a shudder. "That man frightens me. Does he always wear black?"

"He is a man for whom the persistence and fatefulness of black were invented." Etzwane pulled the girl down upon his lap. She sat an arch moment or so, then jumped to her feet. "You are a terrible philanderer. What would my mother say if she knew how things went?"

"I am interested only in what the daughter says."

"The daughter says that a man from the Wildlands has brought you a crate of wild animals, and his beasts await you on the freight ramp."

The superintendent of the station gang at Conceil Siding had brought his Roguskhoi imps to Garwiy. He said, "It's been a month since you came through the Wildlands. You fancied my little pets then; what of them now?"

The imps Etzwane had seen a Conceil Siding had grown a foot. They stood glaring from behind the hardwood bars of the cage. "Th

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were never angels of delights," declared the superintendent. "Now they're well on their way to becoming true fiends. On the right stands Musel; on the left Erxter."

The two creatures stared back at Etzwane with unblinking antagonism. "Put your finger through the bars, and they'll twist it off for you," said the superintendent with relish. "They're mean as sin and no two ways about it. First I thought to treat them well and win them over. I fed them tidbits; I gave them a fine pen; I said 'chirrup' and I whistled little tunes. I tried to teach them speech, and I thought to reward good behavior with beer. To no avail. Each attacked me tooth and nail when I gave him the option. So then I thought I'd learn the truth of the matter. I separated them, and Erxter I continued to gratify and appease. The other, poor Musel, I set about to cow. When he'd strike out at me, I'd deal him a buffet. When he'd gnash at my hand, I'd prod him with a stick; many the beatings he's earned and collected. Meanwhile Erxter dined on the best and slept in the shade. At the end of the experiment was there any difference in their savagery? Not a twitch; they were as before."

"Hmmf." Etzwane backed away as both came to the bars. "Do they speak; do they have words?"

"None. If they understand me, they give no signal. They won't cooperate or perform the smallest task, for love or hunger. They raven up every crust I throw to them, but they'd starve rather than pull a lever to get themselves meat. Now then, fiends!" He rapped on the bars of the cage. "Wouldn't you like my ankle to chew?" He turned back to Etzwane. "Already the rascals know the difference between male and female! You should see them bestir themselves when a woman walks past, and still so young in years. I consider it a disgrace."

Etzwane asked, "How do they recognize a woman?"

The superintendent was puzzled. "How does anyone recognize a woman?"

"For instance, if a man walked by in woman's garments, or a woman dressed as a man: what then?"

The superintendent shook his head in wonder for Etzwane's subtleties. "All this is beyond my knowledge."

"It is something which we will learn," said Etzwane.

All across Shant the placards appeared, in dark blue, scarlet and white:

To fight the Roguskhoi a special corps has been formed:

THE BRAVE FREE MEN.

They wear no torcs.
If you are brave:
If you would lose your torc:
If you would fight for Shant:
You are invited to join the Brave Free Men. The corps is elite.
Present yourself to the agency at Garwiy City.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CHAPTER 10

Down from the Hwan came the Roguskhoi, for the first time marching under clear and obvious leadership, to the wonder of all. Who had instructed the red savages? Even more of a mystery: from where had they derived their massive scimitars, alloyed from a dozen rare metals? Whatever the answers, the Roguskhoi thrust north at a tireless lunging lope: four companies of about two hundred warriors each. They drove into Ferriy, to send the ironmongers fleeing in a panic. Ignoring the ironvats and tanks of precious new cultures, the Roguskhoi swept wide into Cansume. At the border, the Cansume militia, one of the strongest of Shant, waited with their dexax-tipped pikes. The Roguskhoi advanced with sinister care, scimitars at the ready. On the open plain the men of Cansume had no choice but to retreat; scimitars hurled at close range would cut them apart. They retreated into the nearby village Brandvade.

To lure the Roguskhoi the militia thrust forth a crowd of frightened women, and the Roguskhoi, ignoring the bellows of their chieftains, were stimulated into an attack. They stormed the village where, among the stone huts, their scimitars could not be hurled. Pikeheads penetrated horny red hide; dexax exploded and within minutes fifty Roguskhoi were dead.

The Roguskhoi officers reasserted themselves; the columns drew back and continued toward Waxone, Cansume's principal city. Along the way irregular units of the militia set up ambushes from which they fired cane arrows with negligible effect. The Roguskhoi jogged out into the melon fields before Waxone, and here they stopped short, confronted by the most imposing array the men of Shant had yet put forward. An entire regiment of milita faced them, reinforced by four hundred Brave Free Men mounted on pacers. The Brave Free Men wore uniforms after the style of the Pandamon Palace Guards: pale blue trousers with purple braid down the sides, a dark blue blouse with purple frogging, helmets of cemented glass fibers. They carried dexax-tipped pikes, a brace of hand grenades, short heavy glaywood swords, edged with forged ironweb. The militia carried hand axes, grenades and rectangular shields of leather and wood; they had been instructed to advance toward the Roguskhoi, protecting themselves and the cavalry from the Roguskhoi scimitars. At a range of fifty feet they would hurl their grenades, then open ranks for the charge of the Brave Free Men.

The Roguskhoi stood at one end of the melon field, glowering toward the shields of the militia. The four Roguskhoi chieftains stood to the side, distinguished from the ordinary warriors by black leather neckbands supporting bibs of chain mail. They seemed older than the troopers; their skin showed duller and darker; flaps of skin or muscle, like wattles, grew

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

under their chins. They watched the advancing militia in mild perplexity, then uttered a set of harsh sounds; the four companies moved forward at a passionless trot. From the militia came a thin sound, and the shields quivered. The Brave Free Men behind gave hoarse shouts and the militia steadied. At a distance of a hundred yards the Roguskhoi halted and brought their scimitars down, around and back; their muscular processes knotted and tensed. In this position the Roguskhoi were a fearsome sight. The line of the militia sagged; some reflexively hurled their grenades, these exploding halfway between the lines.

From the rear the Cansume officers, somewhat insulated, blew *Advance* on their bugles; the line of shields moved forward, step by step. The Roguskhoi likewise lunged ahead and more futile grenades were thrown. Shields on the left wing sagged, leaving the Brave Free Men without protection. For half a second they hesitated, then charged, plunging against the instant hail of scimitars, which cut down man and pacer before they had moved twenty feet. Nonetheless grenades were thrown by dying arms; Roguskhoi disappeared in dust and flame.

The rest of the line sagged but cohered. A bugle blared *Charge;* the militia now demoralized, faltered and broke too soon; again the shields fell aside, leaving the Brave Free Men exposed to the whirling scimitars. The survivors charged; pikes struck into copper chests. Explosion! dust, fumes, stench; a melee. Bludgeons pounded; gargoyle-faces scowled and bellowed; grenades lofted over the line of battle, generating explosions, fountains of dust, whirls of detached arms and legs. A hideous din rose and fell: furious bugles, Roguskhoi grunts and bellows, the wild braying of wounded pacers, the despair of dying men. . .The dust settled. Dead were half the Roguskhoi and all the Brave Free Men. The Cansume militia fled back into Waxone. The Roguskhoi moved slowly forward; then, altering direction, turned aside into Ferriy.

Finnerack made an anguished report of the battle. "There lay the best of Shant, in a mire of black blood! When they might have drawn back, they refused; from pride they charged to their deaths. Freedom they had earned so well: to what avail?"

Etzwane was surprised by the intensity of Finnerack's grief. "We know now that our men are as brave as the men of old," said Etzwane. "All of Shant will know this as well."

Finnerack seemed not to have heard. He paced back and forth clenching and unclenching his hands. "The militia failed. They were traitors; they would go to cut withe, had I their judgment."

Etzwane said nothing, preferring not to divert Finnerack's emotion toward himself. Finnerack never would be allowed judgment of anyone.

"We can't fight the creatures at close range," said Finnerack. "What

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of our technists? Where are their weapons?"

"Sit down; control your distress," said Etzwane. "I will tell you of our weapons. The technists are impeded by great forces which must be regulated. A sliver of material hurls itself at enormous speed, and thereby produces a very large recoil. For use as hand weapons the slivers must be made almost invisibly thin, and to absorb the recoil a ballast is ejected to the rear. The projectiles reach the ultimate limit of cold in expanding, otherwise they would instantly destroy themselves; rather, they drive a gust of hot air ahead which augments the impact. I have seen tests of fixed cannon; up to a range of a mile the guns will be most deadly. Beyond this distance the projectile erodes to nothing.

"The guns I have seen are by no means light or compact, owing to the necessary ballast. Possibly smaller weapons can be contrived; this is not yet certain. The large weapons are possible, but these must be braced against a tree, or a great stone, or thrust poles, and hence are not so convenient. Still progress has been made.

"In addition, we are producing most ingenious glass arrows. The heads contain an electret, which upon impact produces an electric charge, which in turn detonates a disabling or even lethal charge of dexax. The problems here, I am told, are quality control.

"Finally, we are producing rocket guns: very simple, very cheap devices. The tube is cemented glass fiber, the projectile is ballasted either with a stone cylinder or an impact-detonated charge of dexax. This is a short-range weapon; accuracy is not good.

"All in all, there is cause for optimism."

Finnerack sat stock-still. He had become a man as different from the shaggy brown creature of Camp Three as that man had differed from the Jerd Finnerack of Angwin Junction. His frame had filled out; he stood erect. His hair, no longer a sun-crisped mat, clung to his head in golden-bronze ringlets; his features jutted forth without compromise; the mad glare of his eyes had become a blue glitter. Finnerack was a man without warmth, humor, forgiveness, and very few social graces; he wore only the black of implacability and doom, an idiosyncrasy which had earned him the sobriquet "Black Finnerack."

Finnerack's energy was boundless. He had reorganized the Discriminators with savage disregard for old procedures, previous status or tenure, arousing not so much resentment as astonishment and awe. The Intelligence Agency became his own; in every city of Shant he established subagencies, linked by radio to Garwiy. The Brave Free Men he took even more completely to himself, and wore a Brave Free Man uniform (black rather than pale and dark blue) to the exclusion of all his other clothes.

The Brave Free Men had instantly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

excited the imagination of all Shant. To Garwiy came men by the hundreds, of all ages and sorts, in numbers far beyond Etzwane's capacity to detorc. He took Ifness' machine to Doneis, who called in a team of electronic technists. Gingerly they disassembled the case, to peer down at the unfamiliar components, the exact engineering, the inexhaustible power-cells. Such a machine, they decided, detected electron movement and generated magnetic pulses to cancel the flow.

After numerous experiments, the technists were able to duplicate the function of Ifness' mechanism, though in no such compact package. Five of the devices were installed in the basement of the Jurisdictionary; teams of functionaries worked day and night removing torcs from persons accepted into the corps of Brave Free Men. Finnerack himself screened the applicants; those whom he rejected often made a furious protest for which Finnerack had a stock reply: "Bring me the head of a Roguskhoi and his scimitar; I'll make you a Brave Free Man." Perhaps once a week one of the rejected applicants returned contemptuously to hurl head and scimitar at his feet, whereupon Finnerack, without comment, kicked head and scimitar into a chute, and took the man into the corps. Of those who attempted a Roguskhoi head and failed, no one knew the number.

Finnerack's energy was so furious that Etzwane sometimes felt himself an onlooker rather than a participant in the great events. The situation reflected the efficiency of his own leadership, he told himself. So long as affairs proceeded in a correct direction, he could make no complaint. When Etzwane put questions, Finnerack responded clearly if tersely, seeming neither to welcome nor to resent Etzwane's interest: a fact which, if anything, increased Etzwane's uneasiness; did Finnerack consider him futile, a man whom events had overtaken and passed by?

Mialambre:Octagon had taken his Justice of Shant teams out into the cantons; Etzwane received reports of his activities from incoming intelligence dispatches.

The news of Dystar was less circumstantial. Occasionally word arrived from some far place, always to the same effect: Dystar had come, he had played music of unimaginable grandeur, exalting all who heard.

Finnerack had disappeared. At his rooms in the Old Pagane Tower, at the Jurisdictionary, at the Brave Free Men camps, Finnerack was nowhere to be found.

Three days passed before he returned. To Etzwane's questions Finnerack at first made evasive remarks, then declared that he had been "looking over the countryside, taking a rest."

Etzwane put no further questions, but he was far from satisfied. Was there a woman in Finnerack's life? Etzwane thought not. His actions were uncharacteristic. Finnerack

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

returned to work with his old verve, but Etzwane thought him a trifle less certain, as if he had learned something to perplex or unsettle him.

Etzwane wanted to know more about Finnerack's activities, but would have been forced to call on the Intelligence Agency for help, which seemed not only inappropriate but foolish. . .Must he then organize a second competing intelligence system, to bring him his information? Ridiculous!

The day after Finnerack's return Etzwane visited the technist workshops along the Jardeen estuary. Doneis took him along a set of benches where the new guns were in production. "Projectiles of pure Halcoid Four-One have not proved practical," said Doneis. "They extend almost instantaneously, producing inacceptable recoil. We have tried three thousand variations, and now use a stuff which expands at about one-tenth the speed of Four-One. In consequence the weapon requires only a thirty-pound ballast. Halcoid-Prax additionally is harder and less susceptible to atmospheric friction. The new splint is still no larger than a needle. . .Here the trigger is fitted into the stock. . .These are the elastic bands which prevent the ballast from flying to the rear. . .The electret is inserted; the ballast is installed. . .The mechanism is tested. . .Here is the firing range, where the sights are mounted. We find that the weapon has an essentially flat trajectory across its entire range, which is slightly in excess of a mile. Do you care to test this gun?"

Etzwane picked up the weapon, rested it upon his shoulder. A yellow dot in the optical sights, directly in front of his eye, indicated the impact area.

"Drop the magazine into this socket, throw this clamp. When you press the trigger the ballast will strike the electret, producing an impulse which stimulates the splint. Be prepared for the recoil; brace yourself."

Etzwane peered through the lens, and placed the yellow dot on the glass target. He pressed the yellow button, to feel an instant shock which thrust him backward. Down the range appeared a streak of white fire, impinging upon the now-shattered target.

Etzwane put down the weapon. "How many can you produce?"

"Today we will finish only twenty, but we should soon triple this number. The principal problem is ballast. We have requisitioned metal from all Shant, but it is slow in arriving. The Director of Materials informs me that he has the metal but transportation is not available. The Director of Transportation tells me to the contrary. I don't know which to believe. In any event we are not getting our metal."

"I'll take care of the matter," said Etzwane. "You'll get your metal in a hurry. Meanwhile, I have a somewhat different problem for your attention: a pair of Roguskhoi imps, probably

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

six months to a year old, already vicious, already alert to the presence of women. I think we should learn how and why they are so stimulated, what processes are involved. In short, are they affected visually, by odor, telepathically, or how?"

"I understand precisely. The problem is one of obvious importance; I will put our biologists to work at once."

Etzwane conferred first with the Aesthete Brise, the Director of Transport, then with Aun Sharah. As Doneis had averred, each blamed the other for the lack of massive metal in Garwiy. Etzwane went into explicit detail and concluded that the problem was one of priority. Aun Sharah had pre-empted the available ships to transport food to the refugee-swollen maritime cantons.

"The health of the people is important," Etzwane told Aun Sharah, "but our first concern is killing Roguskhoi, which means metal to Garwiy."

"I understand all this," Aun Sharah replied shortly. His complacent ease had gone, his complexion had lost its smooth tone. "I do the best that I can; remember, this is not my chosen occupation."

"Is this not true of all of us? I am a musician; Mialambre is a jurist; Brise is an Aesthete; Finnerack is a withe-cutter. We are all fortunate in our versatility."

"Possibly true," said Aun Sharah. "I hear you have greatly changed my old Discriminators."

"We have indeed. All Shant is changing: I hope not for the worse."

The Roguskhoi swept on through north-central and northeast Shant, roaming at will through Sansume, most of Marestiy, large parts of Faible and Purple Stone. Three times they attempted to swim the broad River Maure into Green Stone; on each occasion the regional militia put forth in fishing boats to pelt the invaders with dexax grenades. In the water the Roguskhoi were helpless; men knew the exhilaration of slaughtering their previously invincible opponents. The successes however were not real; the Roguskhoi were insensitive both to their own losses and to the human exultation; they marched thirty miles upstream to Opalsand, where the Maure flowed only three feet deep and crossed in force. Their intent clearly was to sweep through Green Stone, Cape, Galwand, Glirris and grind the survivors against the Roguskhoi forces already in Azume. They would thereby destroy millions of men, capture millions of women and control all northeast Shant—a disaster of unthinkable proportions.

Etzwane conferred with Finnerack, Brise and San-Sein, this last man the nominal commander of the Brave Free Men. At this time approximately two thousand Brave Free Men had been armed with halcoid guns: a corps which Finnerack had intended to dispatch through Fairlea into the Hwan foothills of Sable, to hold Seamus and Bastern, to ambush and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

harass the Roguskhoi as they came down from the Hwan. The northeast, so he declared, must be written off; he saw no profit in desperate half measures doomed to failure. For the first time Etzwane took issue with Finnerack on a major decision; to Etzwane a lack of reaction in the northeast meant the betrayal of millions; he found the idea unacceptable.

Finnerack was unmoved. "Millions must die; the war is bitter. If we are to win, we must steel ourselves to death and think in terms of grand strategy rather than a series of hysterical small-scale operations."

"The principle is correct," said Etzwane. "On the other hand, we can't let preconceived doctrine tie us in knots. Brise, what ships now lie in Shellflower Bay?"

"Small vessels, the Stonebreaker packet, a few merchantmen, fishing craft: all there mostly in Seacastle harbor."

Etzwane spread out his maps. "The Roguskhoi march north down Maure Valley. The militia will impede them with grenades and landmines. If we land our troops by night, here at this village Thran, they can occupy this ridge above Maurmouth. Then when the Roguskhoi appear, we will deal with them."

San-Sein examined the maps. "The plan is feasible."

Finnerack grunted.

Etzwane said to San-Sein, "March your men to Seacastle, embark upon the vessels that Brise will provide; set forth at once to the east."

"We will do our utmost, but will there be time?"

"The militia must hold three days, by any ruse and tactic. Three days of fair winds should fetch you to Thran harbor."

Forty-two pinnaces, smacks and trawlers, each carrying thirty Brave Free Men, set forth to the relief of the northeast. San-Sein himself commanded the operation. Three days the wind held fair; on the third night the winds died, to the disgust of San-Sein who had wished to enter the harbor by night. Dawn found the fleet still a half-mile offshore, with any conceivable benefit of stealth or surprise gone by the boards. Cursing the calm weather, San-Sein scrutinized the shore through a telescope and went suddenly rigid with consternation. The lens of the telescope showed a sinister stir invisible to the naked eye. Roguskhoi crowded harbor-front houses of Thran village. The militia had not held. The Roguskhoi had won through to the sea, to set up an ambush of their own.

A dawn wind had come to send ripples dancing over the water. San-Sein signaled his vessels together and issued new orders.

On the freshening breeze the flotilla drove into Thran harbor; instead of tying up at the jetty or anchoring they grounded upon the shingle. The Brave Free Men, debarking, formed a skirmish line; they slowly advanced toward the harbor-side houses, from which the Roguskhoi demon-masks now peered.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Roguskhoi burst forth like ants from a broken ant hill, to charge the beach. They were met by a thousand streaks of incandescent air and destroyed.

By Intelligence Agency radio San-Sein reported the operation to Etzwane and Finnerack. "We lost not a man; we killed five hundred. As many more retreated to Maurmouth and up the course of the Maure. There now is no question; with the guns we can hunt down the creatures as if they were crippled ahulphs. But this is not all the story. We succeeded, but only by luck. Had we put into Thran by night, as planned, I would not be here now to report the disaster. The Roguskhoi knew of our approach; they were apprised. Who betrayed us?"

Etzwane asked, "Who knew the plans?"

"Four: those who formed them."

Etzwane sat in cogitation; Finnerack scowled toward the diaphragm.

"I will look into the matter," said Etzwane. "Meanwhile we have saved the northeast, a cause for rejoicing. Pursue the creatures; hunt them down, but use caution; beware ambushes and narrow places. The future at last looks good."

Finnerack snorted. "You, Gastel Etzwane, are an optimist, who sees only a foot in front of his nose. The Roguskhoi were sent here to destroy us; do you believe that their sponsors, and I refer to the Palasedrans, will submit so easily? The future holds only trouble."

"We shall see," said Etzwane. "I must say that never before have I been called an optimist."

While reporting the foray to Brise, Etzwane inquired as to a possible leakage of information. Brise was perplexed and indignant. "Are you asking if I informed anyone of the raid? Do you take me for a fool? The answer is an unqualified no."

"The question was a formality," said Etzwane. "To close off the matter completely, there was no arrangement or understanding between you and the Office of Material Procurement?"

Brise hesitated, then chose his words carefully. "There was absolutely no mention of a raid."

Etzwane's senses were alert to the slightest subtlety of intonation. "I see. What precisely was your discussion?"

"A trivial affair. The director wanted ships sent to Oswiy, coincidentally on the exact date of the raid. I told him no, and in jocular fashion suggested that he schedule his shipment from Maurmouth instead." Brise hesitated. "Perhaps in some remote sense this might be considered an indiscretion, were I speaking with a person other than the Director of Material Procurement."

"Precisely so," said Etzwane. "In the future, please joke with no one."

Finnerack approached Etzwane the next day. "What of Brise?"

Etzwane had already considered his response. To evade or dissemble

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was to compromise his integrity. "Brise claims to have maintained absolute discretion. However, he made a jocular request that Aun Sharah have freight shipments ready at Maurmouth."

Finnerack made a guttural sound. "Ah! So now we know!"

"It seems so. I must consider what to do."

Finnerack raised his blond eyebrows incredulously. "What to do? Is there any question?"

"There is indeed. Assuming that, like Sajarano, he favors a victory of the Roguskhoi, the matter of interest to us is 'Why?' Both Sajarano and Aun Sharah are men of Shant, born and bred. What sets them apart? Lust for power or wealth? Impossible in Sajarano's case; what more could he want? Have the Palasedrans seduced them with a drug? Have they devised a telepathic method of instilling obedience? We must get to the bottom of these matters, before the same techniques are practiced on you and me. After all, why should we be immune?"

Finnerack smiled his crooked angry smile. "The same question has often crossed my mind, especially when you are lenient with our enemies."

"I am not lenient; be assured of this," said Etzwane. "But I must be subtle."

"What of punishment?" Finnerack demanded. "Aun Sharah contrived the deaths of twelve hundred Brave Free Men! Should he escape because of subtlety?"

"His guilt is not proved. To kill Aun Sharah on suspicion, or because of rage, could do absolutely no good. We must learn his motives."

"What then of the Brave Free Men?" stormed Finnerack. "Must they risk their lives willy-nilly? I am responsible to them, and I must protect them."

"Finnerack, you are responsible not to the Brave Free Men, but to the central authority of Shant, which is to say: me. You must not let energy and emotion overpower your reason. Let us be clear on this. If you feel that you cannot work to a long-range plan, you had best detach yourself from the government and fix upon some other occupation." Etzwane met Finnerack's flaming blue stare. "I do not claim infallibility," he continued. "In regard to Aun Sharah, I agree that he is probably guilty. It is absolutely essential that we learn the reason behind his actions."

Finnerack said, "The knowledge is not worth the life of a single man."

"How do you know this?" demanded Etzwane. "We don't know what the reason is; how can you assess it?"

"I have no time for these matters just now," grumbled Finnerack. "The Brave Free Men occupy my time."

Here was the opportunity for which Etzwane had been hoping. "I agree that you have far too much work. I'll put someone else in charge of the Intelligence System, and give you help with the Brave Free Men."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Finnerack's grin became wolfish. "I don't need any help with the Brave Free Men."

Etzwane ignored him. "Meanwhile we'll watch Aun Sharah carefully and give him no scope to harm us."

Finnerack had departed. Etzwane sat thinking. Events seemed to be going favorably. The new weapons were successful; Mialambre and Dystar, each in his way, contributed to the new nation which Shant must now become. Finnerack with his passion and obstinacy posed the most immediate problem; he was not a man to be easily controlled, or even influenced. . .Etzwane gave a bark of sardonic laughter. When, alone and fearful, he had yearned for a loyal and trustworthy henchman, the image of the placid blond boy at Angwin Junction had come to his mind. The Finnerack Etzwane had finally recruited was a man almost totally unsuited to Etzwane's needs; he was stubborn, wayward, cantankerous, headstrong, secretive, moody, inflexible, vengeful, narrow-minded, pessimistic, uncooperative, perhaps neither trustworthy nor loyal. Finnerack admittedly had done excellent work with the Brave Free Men and the Intelligence Agency, all of which was beside the point. Etzwane's original fear had now dissipated. No matter what his own fate, the war against the Roguskhoi had created its own momentum. New Shant was an irrevocable reality. In twenty years, for better or worse, torcs would be museum pieces and the Anome would wield a different sort of power. (Who would then be Anome? Mialambre:Octagon? Dystar? San-Sein?)

Etzwane went to look down into Corporation Plaza. Dusk was coming on. Tonight he must consider tactics in regard to Aun Sharah.

He departed his office and descended to the plaza. The folk of Garwiy had now learned of the great victory at Maurmouth; as he walked Etzwane could hear fragments of excited conversation. He was reminded of Finnerack's gloomy prognostication; conceivably Finnerack was right. The worst might be yet to come.

Etzwane went to his suite in the Roseale Hrindiana, where he planned to bathe, dine, read intelligence reports, perhaps dally a bit with Dashan of Szandales. . .He opened the door. The suite was dim, almost dark. Unusual! Who had turned down the lights? He stepped within and touched the light-wand. Illumination failed to come. Etzwane became dizzy. The air held an odd acid tang. He staggered to a divan, then, thinking better of relaxing, started to the door. His senses failed him. He tried to reach and grope; he felt the door latch. . .A hand took his arm and led him sagging back into the room.

All was not as it should be, thought Etzwane. He felt peculiarly uneasy, yet fatigued and torpid, as if his sleep had been interrupted by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dreams. He sat up from his couch, unaccountably weak; perhaps he had dreamt indeed: the dark, the numbness, the hand on his arm, then—voices.

Etzwane rose to his feet and went to look out across the Hrindiana gardens. The time was early morning: about the time he usually arose. He went into the bathroom, to stare in wonder at the haggard face in the mirror. His beard was a dark stubble; his pupils were large and dark. He bathed, shaved himself, dressed, and descended to the garden where he took breakfast. He found himself to be ravenously hungry and thirsty as well. . .Strange. With his breakfast came a copy of the morning journal. He chanced to notice the date—Shristday? Yesterday had been Zaelday; today was Ettzday. . .Shristday? Something was wrong.

He walked slowly to the Jurisdictionary. Dashan greeted him with excitement and wonder. "Where have you been? We have all been helpless with anxiety!"

"I've been away," said Etzwane. "Somewhere."

"For three days? You should have let me know," scolded Dashan.

Finnerack likewise had been gone three days, reflected Etzwane. Strange. . .

CHAPTER 11

In Garwiy a new feeling pervaded the air: hope and elation, mingled with melancholy for the passing of a long and placid era. Children no longer took the torc, and it was understood that after the war all deserving persons might have their torcs removed. What then of law and discipline? Who would keep the peace when the Anome lost the last of his coercive powers? For all the elation a degree of uncertainty could be felt everywhere. Etzwane brooded long hours over the situation. He was, so he feared, bequeathing to the new Anome a vexing array of problems.

Dystar came to Garwiy and presented himself to Etzwane. "To the best of my ability I have done your bidding. My task is at an end. The folk of Shant are one; events have made them one."

Etzwane realized suddenly that his indecision had been artificial. The Anome of Shant must be a man of the broadest possible scope, the most profound imagination. "Dystar," said Etzwane, "your task is done, but another awaits, which only you can fulfill."

"This I doubt," said Dystar. "What is the task?"

"You are now Anome of Shant."

"What?. . .Nonsense. I am Dystar."

Etzwane was taken aback by Dystar's displeasure. He said stiffly, "My hopes are only for Shant. Someone must be Anome; I thought to choose the best."

Dystar, now half amused, spoke in a milder voice: "I have neither taste nor facility for such affairs. Who am I to judge the theft of a bullock or calculate the tax on candles? If I had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

power, my deeds would be wild and ruinous: towers among the clouds, pleasure barges a mile long to waft musicians through the isles of the Beljamar, expeditions to the Lost Kingdoms of Caraz. No, Gastel Etzwane; your vision exceeds your practicality: often the case with a musician. Employ the wise Mialambre for your Anome, or better, use none at all; what advantage in an Anome when there are no torcs to explode?"

"All very well," said Etzwane in a huff, "but—reverting to the practicality which I so miserably lack—who would govern in this case? Who would order? Who would punish?"

Dystar had lost interest in the matter. "These are tasks for specialists, folk who have interest in such affairs. . .As for myself, I must take myself away, perhaps to Shkoriy. I can play no more music; I am done."

Etzwane leaned forward in wonder. "You cannot expect me to believe this! What can be your reason?"

Dystar smiled and shrugged. "I escaped the torc; I knew the exaltation of freedom, to my great melancholy."

"Hmmf. . .But do not go to Shkoriy to brood; what could be more futile? Seek out Frolitz, attach yourself to his troupe; here is cure for melancholy, I can assure you of this."

"You are right," said Dystar. "It is what I will do. I thank you for your wise advice."

For two moments the secret trembled on Etzwane's tongue, but he said only, "I wish I could join you." Certainly, on some merry night in a far tavern, while the troupe drank wine and talked at large, Fordyce or Mielke or Cune or even Frolitz would confide to Dystar his connection with Etzwane.

Dystar had gone his way. As an idle exercise Etzwane tried to contrive a theoretical government which might serve Shant as well as a wise and decisive Anome. He became interested in his construction; he refined and modified and presently evolved what seemed a feasible disposition.

He specified two interacting organs of government. The first, a Council of Patricians, included the directors of transportation, trade and economics, communication, law and justice, military forces, an Aesthete of Garwiy, a musician, a scientist, a historian, two persons of eminence, and two persons selected by the second council. The Council of Patricians would be self-perpetuating, selecting its own members, discharging them by a consensus of two-thirds. One would be chosen First of Shant, to serve a term of three years or until voted from office by a consensus of two-thirds.

The second body, the Council of Cantons, comprised representatives from each of the sixty-two cantons and additional delegates from the cities Garwiy, Brassei, Maschein, Oswiy, Ilwiy, and Whearn.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Council of Cantons might propose acts and measures to the Council of Patricians and further might expel a member of the Council of Patricians by a two-thirds vote. A separate College of Justice would guarantee equity to each person of Shant. The Director of Law and Justice sitting on the Council of Patricians would be selected from the fellows of the College of Laws.

Etzwane called together Mialambre: Octagon, Doneis, San-Sein, Brise and Finnerack and set forth his proposals. All agreed that the system merited at least a trial, and only Finnerack put forth serious objections. "You overlook one matter: at large and living in Shant are the magnates who won their ease through the pain of others. Should not the concept of indemnification be codified into the new system?"

"This is more properly a matter for adjudication," said Etzwane.

Finnerack warmed to his subject. "Further," why should some toil for a mouthful of bread while long-fingered sybarites partake of Forty-Five Dishes? The good things should be divided; we should start the new system on a basis of equality."

Mialambre responded: "Your sentiments are generous and do you credit. All I can say is that such drastic redistributions have previously been attempted, always to result in chaos, and cruel tyranny of one sort or another. This is the lesson of history, which we must now heed."

Finnerack was silent.

Seven companies of Brave Free Men, augmented by the now enthusiastic militia, attacked the Roguskhoi on four broad fronts. The Roguskhoi, adapting to their new vulnerability, moved by night, sheltered in forests and wildernesses, attacked by surprise, seeking always women, sometimes at vast risk to themselves. Grudgingly they retreated from the coast, back through cantons Marestiy and Faible.

Etzwane received a report from Doneis, the Director of Technical Achievement. "The Roguskhoi imps have been studied at length. They prove to be creatures of the most peculiar sort, and it is hard to understand their human semblance; nevertheless they require a human woman as hostess for their spawn. In what conceivable environment could they have so evolved?"

"In Palasedra, so it has been suggested."

"This is possible; the Palasedrans have long been evolving a warrior sort. Certain Caraz mariners claim to have seen the creatures. It is a great puzzle."

"Have you learned how the Roguskhoi identify women?"

"There was no problem here. One of the female essences lures them. They are drawn as sure as an ahulph strikes carrion; they will detect the most evanescent whiff and strive through any obstacle to sate themselves."

The Brave Free Men now numbered over five thousand. Fin-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nerack had become more remote and single-minded than ever; rancor seemed to burn inside him like fire in a stove. Etzwane's uneasiness grew in proportion. To reduce the scope of Finnerack's authority, Etzwane fragmented the leadership into five phases. Black Finnerack became Captain of Strategy; San-Sein was Captain of Field Operations; additionally there were Captains of Logistics, Recruitment and Training, Weaponry.

Finnerack protested the new situation in a cold fury. "Always you make things more cumbersome! In the place of one Anome you give us a hundred politicians; for one responsible and efficient commander you substitute a committee of five. Is this sensible? I wonder at your motives!"

"They are simple," said Etzwane. "An Anome can no longer control Shant; a hundred men are needed. The war, the armies of Shant, their strategy, tactics and goals are likewise too large for the control of a single man."

Finnerack removed his black hat and threw it into a corner. "You underestimate me."

"This, I assure you, is not the case," said Etzwane.

The two examined each other for a moment without friendliness. Etzwane said, "Sit down a moment; I want to ask you something."

Finnerack went to a divan, leaned back, thrust his black boots out across the Burazhesq rug. "What is your question?"

"A short time ago you disappeared for three days. When you returned you gave no account of your whereabouts. What happened to you during this time?"

Finnerack gave a sour grunt. "It is unimportant."

"I think not," said Etzwane. "A short time ago I went to my suite and was drugged by some sort of gas, or so I suppose. I awoke three days later, without any knowledge of what had transpired. Is this what happened to you?"

"More or less," Finnerack brought the words forth reluctantly.

"Have you noticed any consequences of this event? Do you feel yourself different in any way?"

Finnerack again paused before replying. "Of course there are no differences. Do you feel differences?"

"No. None whatever."

Finnerack had departed; Etzwane still lacked insight into the workings of Finnerack's mind. Finnerack had no obvious weaknesses: no yearning for ease, wealth, drink, fair women, soft living. Etzwane could not say as much for himself; though recognizing the dangers of self-indulgence; he tried to live in relative austerity. Dashan of Szandales, either by her initiative or his own—Etzwane had never felt certain of the matter—had become his mistress. The situation pleased Etzwane because of its convenience. In due course, when once again he became a musician, the situation no doubt would alter.

San-Sein, the Captain of Field

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Operations, one morning came into Etzwane's office with a roll of charts. "We are presented an opportunity of great promise," he stated. "The Roguskhoi have broken; they retreat toward the Hwan. One horde moves south through Ascalon and Seamus, another in Ferriy has pulled back into Bastern, and this column from Cansume has entered South Marestiy and marches toward Bundoran. Do you see where they tend?"

"If they plan to return into the Wildlands, they more than likely will pass up Mirk Valley."

"Exactly. Now here is my plan, which I have already discussed and cleared with Finnerack. Suppose that we harry the column close on the rear, enough to keep them curious; but that here at Mirk Defile we prepare an ambush."

"All very well," said Etzwane, "but how do you bring troops to Mirk Defile?"

"Notice the balloon-way and the prevailing winds. If we loaded forty balloons at Oswiy and let them fly free, they would reach Mirk Defile in six hours. The winch tender need only put down to discharge troops, then continue south to the Great Ridge Route."

Etzwane considered. "The idea sounds appealing. But what of the winds? I was born in Bashon, and as I recall they blow down the Mirk as often as up. Have you spoken to the meteorologists?"

"Not yet. Here are the wind arrows on the chart."

"The project is far too chancy. Suppose we run into a calm? They often occur about this time. We'd have forty balloon-loads of men lost deep in the Wildlands. Rather than balloons we need gliders." Etzwane suddenly remembered the builders of Canton Whearn. He reflected a moment, then bent over the map. "Mirk Defile is the obvious route. Suppose the Roguskhoi learned of the ambush? They might very well turn aside at Bashon and head east, past Kozan, before turning south into the Wildlands. We can put troops into Kozan without difficulty; the baloon-way passes only twenty miles west. Here on Kozan Bluffs is where we must set up our ambush."

"But how do we apprise the Roguskhoi of the Mirk Ambush, so that they will turn aside?"

"Leave that to me. I know a subtle method. If it succeeds, well and good. If it fails, we are no worse off than before. Your instructions are these: confide to no one that the Mirk Valley ambush is nonoperative. The secret must lie between you and me alone. Ready your troops at Oswiy; load the balloons but, rather than allowing them to drift free, send them south along the balloon-way into Seamus. Disembark, march to Kozan Bluffs and establish your ambush."

San-Sein was gone. The plot had been set into motion. Once again Brise would be the instrument of news leakage to Aun Sharah.

Etzwane went to his telephone and called the Intelligence Agency

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

radio operator. "Make contact with Pelmonte in Canton Whearn. Request that the superintendent be brought to the microphone, and thereupon notify me."

An hour later Etzwane heard the voice of the Superintendent of Whearn. Etzwane said, "Do you remember when Gastel Etzwane, the Anome's assistant, passed through Whearn several months ago?"

"I do indeed."

"At such time I recommended that you build gliders. What progress have you made in this direction?"

"We have done your bidding. We have built gliders, to the best design. With a dozen complete and with no word from you we have somewhat slowed the pace of our construction."

"Proceed once again at full haste. I will send men to Whearn to take delivery."

"Do you plan to send flyers?"

"We have none to send."

"Then they must be trained. Select a contingent of your best, send them to Pelmonte. In due course they will fly the gliders wherever you wish."

"This is what shall be done. Thanks to men like yourself, the Roguskhoi are in retreat. We have come a far way these last few months."

CHAPTER 12

Brise spoke to Etzwane. "I have followed your instructions. Aun Sharah knows of the Mirk ambush. It is a job for which I do not consider myself fitted."

"Nor more do I. But the job must be done. Now we will wait for eventualities."

Reports came hourly to Etzwane. A Roguskhoi column formed of four raiding parties, representing the total force which had subdued northeast Shant, marched south up the Mirk Valley, accompanied by an unknown number of captive women. Brave Free Men mounted on pacers harried the Roguskhoi flanks and rearguard, and themselves suffered casualties as a result of Roguskhoi countermaneuvers; the way of the column was marked by a line of corpses.

The horde approached Bashon, where the temple, deserted and forlorn, had already entered the first stages of decay.

At Rhododendron Way the column paused. Six chieftains, conspicuous for bibs of metal chain hanging over their chests, conferred and peered up Mirk Valley toward the Hwan. There was however no indecision; they swung east along Rhododendron Way, passing under the great dark trees. Hearing the news, Etzwane remembered an urchin named Mur playing in the white dust under these same trees. At the end of Rhododendron Way, with open country before them, the chieftains paused once again to confer. An order was passed down the column; a score of warriors stepped off into the foliage beside the Way. The threat of their scimitars

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

effectually prevented any close pursuit by the cavalry, which must now retreat and circle either north or south of the Way.

The Roguskhoi left the main road and slanted south into the Hwan foothills. Above them bulked Kozan Bluffs, a knob of gray limestone pocked by ancient caves and tunnels.

The Roguskhoi approached the bluff. From the west came a company of Brave Free Men; from the east paced the cavalry which had harried the rear. The Roguskhoi jogged up toward the Hwan, passing close under Kozan Bluff. From the holes and crannies came sudden white streaks of gunfire. From the east the Brave Free Men cavalry approached; and likewise from the west.

Placards of purple, green, pale-blue and white announced the new government of Shant:

> The Brave Free Men have liberated our country. For this we rejoice and celebrate the unity of Shant. The Anome has graciously given way to an open and responsive government, consisting of a Purple House of Patricians and a Green House of the Cantons. Already three manifestoes have been issued:
>
> There are to be no more torcs.
>
> The indenture program is to be highly modified.
>
> Religious systems may commit no further crimes. The Purple Patricians include the following:

Listed were the directors and their functions. Gastel Etzwane, a director-at-large, was declared Executive Director. The second director-at-large was Jerd Finnerack. San-Sein was Director of Military Affairs.

Aun Sharah occupied the top floor of an ancient blue and white glass structure behind the Corporation Plaza, almost under the Ushkadel. His office was very large, almost eccentrically bare of furnishing. The high north wall consisted entirely of clear glass panes. The worktable was at the center of the room; Aun Sharah sat looking north through the great expanse of glass. When Etzwane and Finnerack entered the room, he nodded courteously and rose to his feet. For five seconds a silence held; the three stood each in his attitude in the great bare room, fateful as players on a stage.

Etzwane spoke formally: "Aun Sharah, we are forced to the conviction that you are working adversely to the interests of Shant."

Aun Sharah smiled as if Etzwane had paid him a compliment. "It is hard to please everybody."

Finnerack took a slow step forward, then drew back and said nothing.

Etzwane, somewhat nonplussed by Aun Sharah's agreeable demeanor, spoke on. "The fact of your actions is established. Still, we are puzzled as to your motives. In fostering the cause of the Roguskhoi, how do you gain, how do you serve yourself?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Aun Sharah, still smiling—peculiarly, so Etzwane thought—asked, "Has the fact been demonstrated?"

"Abundantly. Your conduct has been under scrutiny for several months. You prompted Shirge Hillen of Camp Three to kill me; you put spies on my movements. As Director of Material Procurement you have in several instances substantially lessened the war effort by diverting effort into nonessential projects. At Thran in Green Stone your ambush of Brave Free Men failed, by luck alone. In the engagement at Kozan Bluff we have achieved decisive proof. You were informed that Mirk Defile was to be guarded, whereupon the Roguskhoi veered aside and were destroyed. The reality of your guilt is established. Your motives are a cause for perplexity."

The three again stood silently in the center of the vast bleak room.

"Please sit down," said Aun Sharah gently. "You have pelted me with such a barrage of nonsense that my mind is confused and my knees are weak." Etzwane and Finnerack remained standing; Aun Sharah sat down and took up stylus and paper. "Please repeat your bill of charges, if you will."

Etzwane did so, and Aun Sharah made a list. "Five items: all wind and no substance. Many men have been destroyed for as little."

Etzwane began to feel perplexed. "You deny the charges then?"

Aun Sharah smiled his curious smile. "Let me ask rather, can you prove any of the charges?"

"We can," said Finnerack.

"Very well," said Aun Sharah. "We will consider the items one at a time—but let us call in the jurist Mialambre:Octagon to weigh the evidence, and Director of Transport Brise as well."

"I see no objection to this," said Etzwane. "Let us go to my office."

Back in his old office Aun Sharah waved the others to seats, as if they were underlings he had summoned to a conference. He addressed Mialambre: "Not half an hour ago Gastel Etzwane and Black Finnerack entered my office and delivered a set of five charges, so preposterous that I suspect their sanity. The charges are these:" Aun Sharah read off from his list.

"The first accusation, that I notified Shirge Hillen of Etzwane's coming is no more than an unfounded suspicion, the more vicious in that Etzwane has made no attempt to find an alternative solution. I suggested that he investigate the balloon-way offices; this he neglected to do. I made a few quiet inquiries; in twenty minutes I learned that a certain Parway Harth had in fact sent out an intemperate and somewhat ambiguous message which Shirge Hillen might well have understood as an order to kill Gastel Etzwane. I can prove this three different ways; through Parway Harth, through a subordinate who took the message to the balloon-way radio, and through the files in the balloon-way radio office.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Item Two: the charge that I put spies upon Gastel Etzwane. The reference is to a surveillance performed by one of my trackers: an act of casual interest. I do not deny this charge; I claim that it is too trivial to be significant of anything whatever.

"Item Three: as Director of Material Procurement I have in several instances diminished the war effort. In hundreds of instances I have augmented the war effort. I complained to Gastel Etzwane that my abilities did not lie in this direction; he stubbornly ignored my statement. If the war effort suffered, the fault is his alone. I did my best.

"Items Four and Five: I arranged a Roguskhoi ambush at Thran, and I attempted to betray an ambush of our own in Mirk Valley. A few days ago I stepped into the office of Director Brise. In a most peculiar and embarrassed manner he contrived an elephantine hint as to an ambush in Mirk Valley. I am a suspicious man, skilled at intrigue. I detected a plot. I declared as much to Brise; I further insisted that he leave me alone not for an instant, day or night; he must absolutely assure himself that I had transmitted no information. I convinced him that such was his duty to Shant, that if an ambush were in fact betrayed we must learn the true culprit. To do this, we must be able to demonstrate my innocence beyond argument. He is a reasonable and honorable man; he agreed to my analysis of the situation. I ask you now, Brise: did I, during the applicable period, inform anyone at any time of anything whatsoever?"

"You did not," said Brise shortly. "You sat in my office, in my company and that of my trusted associates for two days. You communicated with no one, you betrayed no ambush."

"We received news of the battle at Kozan," Aun Sharah went on. "Brise now confessed to me that he considered himself to blame for the fact that suspicion had fallen upon me. He reported his conversation with Gastel Etzwane.

"I understand now that I am linked to the ambush at Thran by one question and one answer. I required that Brise send bottoms to Oswiy; he said no, I must send my goods to Maurmouth. On this basis my guilt in regard to the Thran ambush is assumed. The concept is far-fetched but remotely possible, except for a secondary fact which once again Gastel Etzwane has not noticed. This question and this answer, in a thousand variations, has become a joke between Brise and myself: repartee as we coordinate our functions. I ask him for transport at one place, he says impossible, find freight at another. Brise, is this correct?"

"It is correct," said Brise in an uncomfortable voice. "The question and the answer might be repeated five times a day. Aun Sharah could have understood nothing of significance in the remarks regarding Oswiy and Thran. I reported them to Gastel Etzwane because he required my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

every word; I neglected to put them into context."

Aun Sharah asked Etzwane, "Do you have any other charges?"

Etzwane gave a sick laugh. "None. I am clearly unfit to make a rational judgment on anyone or anything. I apologize to you, and will make amends as best I can. I must seriously consider resigning from the Purple House."

Mialambre:Octagon spoke in a gruff voice: "Come now, the matter need go no farther; this is no time for extravagant acts."

"Except, in this single regard," said Aun Sharah. "You spoke of amends. If you are serious, return me to my own work; give me back my Discriminators."

"So far as I am concerned," said Etzwane, "they are yours, any that are left. Finnerack has turned the place inside out."

The Roguskhoi had been driven back into the Wildlands, and for a period the war dwindled to a halt. Finnerack presented his estimate of the situation to Etzwane. "They are as if in an impregnable fortress. Our radius of penetration is twenty miles; beyond this line the Roguskhoi breed, rearm, regroup, and presumably recast their strategies."

Etzwane mused. "We have captured thousands of scimitars; they are an alloy unknown to Shant. What is the source of supply? Do they operate foundries deep in the Hwan? A great mystery."

Finnerack gave an indifferent nod. "Our strategy now is self-evident. We must organize our total manpower and gradually occupy the Hwan. It is a toilsome and complicated task, but is there any other method?"

"Probably not," said Etzwane.

"Then back to Palasedra with the brutes! And let the Palasedrans interfere at their peril!"

"Presuming that the Palasedrans are responsible, which is not yet proved."

Finnerack stared in astonishment. "Who else but the Palasedrans?"

"Who else but Aun Sharah? I have learned my lesson."

CHAPTER 13

Summer brought a lull to the war, which extended into the long mild autumn. Shant replaced its damage, mourned its dead men and kidnaped women, augmented its armed might. The Brave Free Men, expanding in numbers and organization, separated into regional divisions, with the cantonal militia serving functions of support and supply. Weapons poured from the Shranke assemblies; the Roguskhoi scimitars, melted and molded, became ballast.

Gilders flew forth from Whearn: double-winged craft, light as moths. A special corps of the Brave Free Men became the Flyers of Shant. Their training at first was makeshift and merciless; those who survived instructed the others. By sheer necessity the Flyers became a skilled and cohesive force, and as a natural consequence began to make prideful

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

demonstrations of reckless daring and elan.

To arm the gliders, the technists produced a ferocious new weapon, a simplified nonballasted version of the halcoid gun. The projectile was composite: halcoid joined to a metal; the firing tube was open at each end. When fired, the halcoid struck forward, the metal was ejected aft; in effect the weapon acted in both directions, eliminating recoil and the need for ballast. When fired from a glider, the ejected missile usually spent itself harmlessly in the air; on the ground the guns were intolerably dangerous.

Before sending gliders out against the Roguskhoi, Finnerack drilled the flyers in battle tactics, the dropping of bombs with accuracy, and safety techniques with respect to the halcoid gun.

From the first Finnerack had been fascinated with the gliders; he learned to fly, and presently, not altogether to Etzwane's surprise, he relinquished his command over the Brave Free Men in order to assume control of the Flyers.

In the middle autumn the ground armies began to move up into the Hwan, pushing west from Cansume, Haghead and Lor-Asphen, retaking Cantons Surrume and Shkoriy. A second force moved south through Bastern, Seamus and Bundoran, into the Wildlands itself. Other companies worked east and south, from Shade and Sable, penetrating the Mount Misk region, and here the Roguskhoi put up fierce resistance. Theirs was now a lost cause. Trained ahulphs spied out their concentrations, which then were bombed or subjected to halcoid fire, from guns mounted in clusters of six.

On other occasions the Roguskhoi were baited into ambush by lures of "female essence," to which they were intensely responsive. Another time, gliders sprayed a Roguskhoi camp with a solution of "female essence" with horrid effect. The Roguskhoi, confused by the contradictory stimuli of odor and eye, seemed to become insanely cantankerous; in short order they were cuffing each other and then exchanging bludgeon blows, until almost all were dead; at once gliders set out across all the Wildlands laden not with dexax but with canisters of "female essence."

Ahulphs, somewhat belatedly sent out to spy, reported the course of the Roguskhoi supply route. It led from the Great Salt Bog into the swamps of Canton Shker, then proceeded north under a dense forest of raintree and parasol daraba, up through the Moaning Mountains and into the Hwan.

The military command dispatched a force to cut the line at the forest edge. Finnerack wanted to react more vehemently. "Is this not evidence? The Palasedrans are responsible. The Salt Bog is no barrier; why should they lack a taste of their own medicine?"

The command captains frowned down at their charts, lacking

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

arguments against convictions so emphatic. Finnerack, somewhat chastened after the Aun Sharah fiasco, had been reanimated by his new role as Flyer. He now wore a Flyer uniform of fine black cloth, cut to something more than ordinary flair. Here, thought Etzwane, with the Flyers of Shant, was Finnerack's natural function; he had never before seemed so zestful and energetic. The power and freedom of flight had exalted him; he walked the world like a man apart, superior in basic fiber to the groundlings, who would never know the terrible joys of sweeping silently across the hills, rising and falling, circling, veering, then swooping like a hawk to blast apart a marching column. . .Etzwane had long lost all fear of Finnerack's turning the Brave Free Men against the government. Too many safeguards had been set up; in retrospect Etzwane saw that he might have been overcautious. Finnerack showed no interest in the sources of power; he seemed satisfied to crush his enemies. For Finnerack, a world without enemies would be a very dull place, thought Etzwane. He now answered Finnerack in his most reasonable voice: "We don't want to punish the Palasedrans for at least three reasons. First, we're not yet finished with the Roguskhoi. Second, Palasedran responsibility is not certain. Third, it would be poor policy needlessly to embroil ourselves in a war with the Palasedrans. They are a fierce people who give back twice as good as they take, as Shant has learned to its sorrow. Suppose the Roguskhoi are an oversight, a mistake? Or the work of a dissident group? We can't plunge Shant into a war so recklessly. After all, what do we know of Palasedra? Nothing. The place is a closed book to us."

"We know enough," said Finnerack. "They have bred an array of weird soldier-beasts, this we learn from Caraz mariners. We find the Roguskhoi trail leading into the Salt Bog toward Palasedra. These are facts."

"True. But they are not all the facts. We need more knowledge. I will send an envoy to Chemaōue."

Finnerack gave a bitter laugh and swung half-about in his chair, the helmet of the Flyers askew on his blond curls.

Etzwane said, "We need be neither weak nor truculent; we are not forced to make this choice. We will drive the Roguskhoi from our lands, and meanwhile we must try to learn the Palasedran intentions. Only a fool acts before thinking, as I have learned."

Finnerack turned to look at Etzwane; the blue eyes showed a narrow glitter, like sunlight reflecting from a far ledge of ice. Then he shrugged and sat back in his seat, a man at peace with himself.

The Roguskhoi were in retreat. The Brave Free Men thrusting into the Hwan from Shade, Sable, Seamus and Bastern suddenly encountered no resistance whatever. Glider patrols and free balloon reconnaissance told

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the same story: the Roguskhoi were streaming south in dozens of columns. For the most part they moved by night, taking what shelter they could during the day. Gliders harassed them from overhead, spitting halcoid, dropping bombs of dexax. "Female essence" had lost its initial effect; The Roguskhoi, while perturbed and agitated, no longer indulged in suicidal paroxysms.

The Flyers were at the pinnacle of their glory. The blue and white uniforms aroused a delirium of adulation; nothing was too good for a Flyer of Shant.

Finnerack likewise had reached his zenith. Watching him as he dealt with business of the Flyers, Etzwane found it hard to recall the pleasant-faced boy he had known at Angwin Junction. For all practical purposes, the boy had died at Camp Three...What of the small dark pinch-faced boy who had escaped Angwin Junction? Looking in the carbon-fume mirror, Etzwane saw a face hollow-cheeked and sallow, with a mouth straight and still. He had known a rich life indeed, thought Etzwane. If Finnerack were now at the crest of his career, Etzwane considered his own work done. He longed to detach himself—to become what? A wandering musician once more? Shant seemed suddenly too small, too limited. Palasedra was a hostile land; Caraz a vast mystery. The name Ifness came into Etzwane's mind. He thought of the planet Earth.

The Roguskhoi, commanded by their roaring chieftains, loped down from the Wildlands, through Canton Shker and into the Great Salt Bog. The Brave Free Men, attacking on the flanks, took a terrible toll, as did the Flyers, veering, swooping, projecting streaks of incandescent air.

The columns dwindled to a trickle, then ended. The Brave Free Men roamed the length and breadth of the Hwan, finding an occasional sickly imp or bands of starving women, but no more Roguskhoi.

Shant was free from its invaders. The Roguskhoi had retired into the Great Salt Bog, a place of black ooze, rust-colored ponds, occasional islands overgrown with coral trees, other islands of sand rising stark and bare, pale green reeds, snake grass, black limberleaf.

In the Salt Bog the Roguskhoi seemed secure and easy and wallowed effortlessly through the ooze. The Brave Free Men pursued until the ground grew soft, then reluctantly drew back. The Flyers knew no such limits. The black morasses, the knolls of bright white sand, the coral tree forests, the winds thrusting in from both the Blue and Purple Oceans created drafts and shafts of rising and falling airs; sunlight shimmered down between tall thunderheads; the gliders soared and swooped at will, no longer pursuing, now wreaking vengeance.

Deeper and deeper into the Great Salt Bog moved the Roguskhoi, harried by the merciless gliders. Etzwane felt impelled to caution

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Finnerack: "Whatever else, do not enter alien territory! Hector the Roguskhoi as you like, back and forth across the Great Salt Bog, but under no circumstances provoke the Palasedrans!"

Finnerack showed his small hard grin. "The boundaries are where? In the center of the Bog? Show me where the exact line lies."

"So far as I know there is no precise boundary. The Salt Bog is like a sea. If you verged too close against the southern shore of the Bog, the Palasedrans would claim encroachment."

"Bog is bog," said Finnerack. "I understand the Palasedran's distress, but I give them no compassion."

"This is beside the point," said Etzwane patiently. "Your orders are: do not operate your gliders within sight of Palasedra."

Finnerack stood bristling in front of Etzwane, who for the first time felt the uncloaked thrust of Finnerack's hatred. Etzwane was affected by a sensation of physical disgust. Finnerack was a good hater. When Etzwane had first identified himself, Finnerack had admitted hate for the boy who had caused him woe, but had not the balance been righted? Etzwane drew a deep breath. Conditions were as they were.

Finnerack had spoken, in a low dangerous voice: "Do you still give me orders, Gastel Etzwane?"

"I do, by authority of the Purple House. Do you serve Shant, or the gratification of your personal passions?"

Finnerack stared at Etzwane ten seconds, then swung away and departed.

The envoy returned from his mission to Chemaoue, with no satisfactory news. "I could make no direct contact with the Eagle-Dukes. They are proud and remote. I cannot fathom their purposes. I received a message to the effect that they could not deal with slaves; if we wanted transactions, we must send down the Anome. I replied that Shant no longer was under the Anome's rule, that I was an emissary of the Purple and Green, but they seemed not to heed."

Etzwane conferred in private with Aun Sharah, who once more occupied his old office overlooking Corporation Plaza.

"I have assiduously studied both sets of circumstances," said Aun Sharah. "In regard to the two ambushes the essential facts are clear. Four persons were informed as to the Thran operation: yourself, San-Sein, Finnerack and Brise. You and San-Sein knew of the Kozan Bluff ambush, which succeeded; you two are eliminated. Brise must certainly have deduced that the Mirk Valley ambush was bogus; he might easily have presumed the Kozan Bluff ambush. He too can be eliminated in the Mirk Valley ambush. Accordingly we must regard Finnerack as the traitor."

Etzwane was silent a moment. Then he said, "I have thought along these same lines. The logic is sound;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the conclusion is absurd. How can the most zealous warrior of Shant be a traitor?"

"I don't know," said Aun Sharah. "I returned to this office, I altered arrangements to suit myself, as you see. In the process I discovered a whole array of eavesdrop devices. I took the liberty of inspecting your suite at the Hrindiana, where I found another such set. Finnerack of course had easy opportunity to arrange these devices."

"Incredible," muttered Etzwane. "Have you located the terminus of the system?"

"They feed into a radio-transmitter, which broadcasts continuously at a low level."

"The devices, the radio—they are of Shant manufacture?"

"They are standard Discriminator adjuncts."

"Hmmf. . .For the present we'll wait and watch. I don't care to make any premature accusations."

Aun Sharah smiled thoughtfully. "Now as to the second investigation: I learn very little. Finnerack simply dropped from sight for three days. I learn only that two men of Canton Parthe occupied the suite next to Finnerack. They departed a day or so after Finnerack's "return." I took detailed descriptions, and I feel that they were not Parthans, whatever the color of their torcs: they hung up no door-fetish and frequently wore blue.

"I naturally made inquiry at the Roseale Hrindiana. Two similar men occupied the suite directly above yours prior to your experience. They then departed without notifying the Hrindiana officials."

"I am baffled," said Etzwane. "I also am greatly afraid. . .I asked Finnerack if he felt differently; he said no. I feel no differently either."

Aun Sharah regarded Etzwane curiously, then made one of his delicate gestures. "I can tell you no more. Naturally I am searching for the Parthans, and Finnerack is being kept under unobtrusive observation. Something suggestive may turn up."

The Flyers of Shant pressed the Roguskhoi ever deeper into the bog, giving no respite; the air above the great morass stunk of carrion. The Roguskhoi moved always southward—toward a destination?—to put all distance between themselves and the Flyers of Shant? No one could say, but presently the northern half of the Salt Bog was as empty of Roguskhoi as Shant itself.

In the gallant colors of victory, the journals of Garwiy published a proclamation of the Purple and Green:

> The war must now be considered at an end, although the Flyers continue to wreak retribution for the countless Roguskhoi atrocities. It is impossible to feel pity for the brutes.
>
> However, we must now terminate our campaign. The glorious feats of the Brave Free Men and the Flyers of Shant will live forever in the history of the race. These noble men must now devote their energies to the regeneration of Shant.
>
> THE WAR IS AT AN END.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Finnerack was late to the meeting of the Purple House. Entering the chamber, he marched with slow steps to his place at the marble table.

Etzwane was speaking. "Our great struggle is done, and I feel that my responsibility is ended. This being the case—"

Finnerack interrupted him. "One moment, so that you may not be resigning under a misapprehension. I have just now received news from Shker. The Flyers of Shant, operating in the southern area of the Great Salt Bog, this morning encountered a dense column of Roguskhoi making at speed for the Palasedran shore. We attacked and approached Palasedra. Our maneuvers were under careful surveillance, and it may be that the Roguskhoi movements were intended to draw us into a condition of technical incursion." Finnerack paused. "This was the event. Our gliders were intercepted by black Palasedran gliders flown with great skill. In the first engagement they destroyed four gliders of Shant, losing none. In the second engagement we altered our tactics and shot down two enemy gliders, losing two of our own. I have received no further reports."

Mialambre broke the silence. "But you were instructed to avoid a close approach to Palasedra."

"Our basic purpose," said Finnerack, "is to destroy the enemy. His whereabouts is immaterial."

"You may think so. I do not. Must we fight a new Palasedran war because of your intractability?"

"We have already been fighting a Palasedran war," said Finnerack. "The Roguskhoi were not generated out of nothingness."

"This is your opinion! Who gave you the right to act for all Shant?"

"A person does what his inner soul directs." Finnerack jerked his head toward Etzwane. "Who gave him the right to take to himself the authority of the Anome? He had no more right than I."

"The difference is real," retorted Mialambre. "A man sees a house on fire. He rouses the inhabitants and extinguishes the blaze. Another, in order to punish the arsonist, fires a village. One man is a hero, the other is a maniac."

San-Sein said, "Black Finnerack, your courage is beyond all question. Unfortunately, your zeal is excessive. Recklessness destroys our freedom of action. Convey these orders instantly to the Flyers of Shant: return to the home territory! Do not again fare forth into the Great Salt Bog until so commanded!"

Finnerack removed his helmet, tossed it upon the marble. "I cannot give these orders. They are not realistic. When the Flyers of Shant are attacked, they fight back with unyielding ferocity."

"Must we send Brave Free Men to control our own Flyers?" roared San-Sein, suddenly in a fury. "If they fly forth again, we will take their gliders and rip off their uniforms! We, the Purple and Green of Shant, are in authority!"

Into the chamber burst a steward:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"From the city Chemaoue in Palasedra comes a strong radio message: the Chancellor demands the voice and ear of the Anome."

The entire Council of Patricians listened to the words of the Palasedran Chancellor, spoken in a language of odd accents and altered sound quality. "I am Chancellor to the Hundred Sovereigns. I will speak to the Anome of Shant."

Etzwane spoke. "The rule of the Anome is ended. You now address the Council of Patricians; say what you will."

"I ask you then: Why do you attack us after two thousand years of peace? Have not four wars and four defeats taught you to beware?"

"The attacks were directed against the Roguskhoi. We drive them back whence they came."

The atmosphere crackled softly while the Chancellor collected his thoughts. He said, "They are nothing of ours. You have driven them from the Bog into Palasedra; is this not an offensive act? You have sent your gliders into our lands; is this not an intrusion?"

"Not if, as we are convinced, you sent the Roguskhoi against us in the first place."

"We worked no such acts. Do you believe this? Send your envoys to Palasedra; you shall see for yourself. This is our generous offer. You have acted with irresponsibility. If you choose not to learn the truth, we will consider you spitefully stupid and men will die."

"We are neither spiteful nor stupid," Etzwane returned. "It is only sensible that we discuss and adjust our differences; we welcome the opportunity to do so, especially if you can demonstrate your noninvolvement in our troubles."

"Send your envoys," said the Chancellor. "Fly them by a single glider to the port Kaoime; they will come to no harm, and there our escort will meet them, with proper demeanor."

CHAPTER 14

Palasedra hung below Shant like a gnarled three-fingered hand, with the Great Salt Bog for a wrist. The mountains of Palasedra formed the bones of the Palasedran hand. They rose in naked juts, and many held aloft the lonely castles of the Eagle-Dukes. The forests of Palasedra tumbled down the seaward valleys. Giant loutranos with straight black trunks supported disproportionately small parasols of dough-colored pulp. Around their shanks surged a dark green froth of similax and wax-pod, which in turn towered above arbors of gohovany, argove, jajuy. The towns of Palasedra guarded the valley sea-mouths. Tall stone houses with high-pitched roofs stood cramped together, one growing from the next like crystals in a rock. Palasedra! a strange, grim land, where every man reckoned himself noble and acknowledged only the authority of an "honor" which everyone recognized but no one enforced, where no door

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was locked, where no window was shuttered, where each man's brain was a citadel as quiet as the castle of an Eagle-Duke.

At Kaoime the glider from Shant slid to a landing on the narrow beach. Four men climbed down from the saddles within the truss. The first was the flyer, the remaining three were Etzwane, Mialambre and Finnerack, who had agreed to visit Palasedra only after his courage, judgment and quality of intelligence had been mocked and challenged, whereupon Finnerack declared his willingness to explore the far side of Caraz if need be.

The stern houses of Kaiome looked down from the back of the beach. Three tall men wearing fitted black gowns and high-crowned black hats came forward. Their movements were stately and mannered.

These were the first Palasedrans Etzwane had seen, and he examined them with interest. They exemplified a race somewhat different from his own. Their skins, pallid as parchment, showed a faint arsenical tarnish to glancing light. Their faces were long, thin and convex, the forehead and chins receding, the nose a prow. One spoke in a muffled guttural voice, forming his words somewhere behind his palate. For this reason, and because he used a strange, oddly accented dialect his speech was almost incomprehensible.

"You are the envoys from Shant?"

"We are."

"You wear no torcs; you have for a fact thrown off the yoke of your tyrant?"

Mialambre started to make a didactic qualification; Etzwane said, "We have altered our style of government; this is a fact."

"In that case, I greet you in my official capacity. We fly at once to Chemaoue. With me then, to the skylift."

They mounted to a platform of woven withe. With a surge and a sway an endless cable took them aloft: up under the argoves, through a hole in the dark green mat and into the airy aisles between the loutranos, up past the dough-colored parasols into the lavender light of the three suns. A platform stood on spider-leg stilts at the lip of a cliff; here they disembarked. A glider awaited them: an intricate device of struts, cords, vanes, with a cabin of withe and film hanging under batwing sails.

The one Palasedran and the three men of Shant entered the cabin. Far across the plateau a group of enormous men, indistinctly seen, thrust a wicker basket full of stones over the precipice. A cable accelerated the glider; smoothly it climbed into the sky and was launched out into the empty spaces.

The Palasedran showed no disposition for conversation. Etzwane presently asked, "You know why we are here?"

The Palasedran said, "I read no exact knowledge. Your ideas find no correspondence with mine."

"Ah," said Mialambre, "you were sent to read our minds."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I was sent to convey you politely to Chemaoue."

"Who is Chancellor? One of the Eagle-Dukes?"

"No, we are now five castes rather than four. The Eagle-Dukes concern themselves with honor."

"We are ignorant of Palasedra and its customs," said Etzwane. "If the Chancellor is not an Eagle-Duke, how does he rule them?"

"The Chancellor rules no one. He acts only for himself."

"But he speaks for Palasedra?"

"Why not? Someone must do so."

"What if he commits you to an unpopular course of action?"

"He knows what is expected of him. It is the way we conduct ourselves, doing what is expected of us. If we fail, our sponsors bear the brunt. Is this not right?" He touched the band surrounding his hat which bore a dozen heraldic badges. "These folk have sponsored me. They gave me their trust. Two are Eagle-Dukes . . .Behold yonder, the castle of Duke Ain Palaeio."

The castle occupied a saddle between two crags: a moldering structure almost invisible against the surrounding stone. To either side stood a handful of black cypresses. Gray-green stoneflower grew in festoons down the foundation walls. . .It fell behind and was lost to view.

Up columns of wind, down slopes of air floated the black glider, sliding ever southward. The mountains became lower; the loutranos disappeared; the similax and argove gave way to hangman tree, dark oak, occasional groves of cypress.

The afternoon waned; the winds and draughts became less definite. As the suns rolled behind the western mountains, the glider slid softly down toward a far leaden shine of water, and presently landed in the dusk behind the town Chemaoue.

A vehicle of pale varnished wood on four tall wheels stood waiting. The draught animals were naked men, bulky of leg and chest, seven feet tall, with skins of a peculiar ruddy ocher. The small neat heads lacked hair; the blunt features showed no expression. Finnerack, who had spoken little during the journey—if anything he seemed uneasy and looked frequently, almost with longing, back the way they had come—now turned Etzwane a sardonic glance as if claiming vindication for his theories.

Mialambre demanded of the Palasedran: "These creatures are the work of your man-makers?"

"They are, though the process is not quite as you assume it to be."

"I make no assumptions; I am a jurist."

"Are never jurists irrational? Especially the jurists of Shant?"

"Why the jurists of Shant, specifically?"

"Your land is rich; you can afford irrationality."

"Not so!" declared Mialambre. "By saying this, you make all your words suspect."

"A matter of no consequence."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The carriage trundled through the dusk. Watching the heaving orange backs, Etzwane asked, "The man-makers continue to do their work in Palasedra?"

"We are imperfect."

"What of these toiling creatures? Do they become perfect?"

"They are good enough as they are. Their stock was cretinous; should we then waste cooperative flesh? Should we kill the cretins and condemn sensitive men to the toil?" The Palasedran's lips curved in a sour smile. "It would be as if we put all our cretins into the upper castes."

"Before we sit down to a ceremonial banquet," said Mialambre, "let me ask this: do you use these creatures for food?"

"There will be no ceremonial banquet."

The carriage rattled along the esplanade, then halted at an inn. The Palasedran made a gesture. "Here you may rest for a period."

Etzwane stared haughtily at the Palasedran. "You bring the envoys of Shant to a waterfront tavern?"

"Where else should we take you? Do you care to pace up and down the esplanade? Should we loft you to the castle of Duke Shaian?"

"We are not sticklers for formality," explained Mialambre. "Still, if you sent envoys to Shant, they would be housed in a splendid palace."

"You accurately represent the distinction between our nations."

Etzwane alighted from the carriage. "Come," he said shortly. "We are not here for pomp and ceremony."

The three marched to the inn. A door of timber planks opened into a narrow room paneled with wood. Along one wall yellow lamps flickered; below were tables and chairs.

An old man with a white shawl over his head stepped forward. "Your wants?"

"A meal and lodging for the night. We are envoys from Shant."

"I will prepare a room. Sit then, and food will be served to you."

The single other occupant of the room, a spare man in a gray cloak, sat at a platter of fish. Etzwane stopped short, puzzled by the familiar poise of head. The man looked around, nodded, returned to work fastidiously at his fish.

Etzwane stood indecisively, then went to stand by the man's table. "I thought you had returned to Earth."

"Such were the orders of the Institute," said Ifness. "However I made an urgent protest, and I am now on Durdane in a somewhat altered capacity. I am happy to say, moreover, that I have not been expelled from the Institute."

"Good news indeed," said Etzwane. "May we join you?"

"Certainly."

The three took seats. Etzwane performed introductions. "These persons are Patricians of Shant: Mialambre:Octagon and Jerd Finnerack. This gentleman—" he indicated Ifness, "—is an Earthman and Fellow of the Historical Institute. His name is Ifness."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Precisely true," said Ifness. "I have had an interesting sojourn upon Durdane."

"Why did you not make your presence known?" demanded Etzwane. "You owed a large responsibility to the situation."

Ifness made a gesture of indifference. "Your management of the crisis was not only competent but local. Is it not better that the enemies of Shant fear Shant rather than Earth?"

"The question is many-sided," said Etzwane. "What do you do here in Palasedra?"

"I study the society, which is of great interest. The Palasedrans dare anthropomorphological experiments which have few counterparts elsewhere. A frugal people, they adapt human waste material to a set of useful functions. The indefatigable resource of the human spirit is a continuing wonder. In an austere land the Palasedrans have evolved a philosophical system by which they take pleasure in austerity."

Etzwane recognized Ifness' old tendency toward evasive prolixity. "In Garwiy I noticed no tendency of your own toward austerity, nor did you espouse a philosophy glorifying want."

"You observed accurately," said Ifness. "As a scholar I am able to transcend my personal inclinations."

For a brief period Etzwane tried to puzzle out the sense of Ifness' words, then he said, "You do not seem to wonder at our presence here in Palasedra."

"A person who conceals his curiosity has knowledge thrust upon him, so I have learned."

"Did you know that the Roguskhoi have sought refuge on Palasedran soil? That our Flyers and the Black Dragons of Palasedra have engaged in combat?"

"This is interesting information," declared Ifness, neglecting a direct answer to the question. "I wonder how the Palasedrans will deal with the Roguskhoi."

Finnerack snorted in disgust. "Do you doubt that the Palasedrans sponsor the Roguskhoi?"

"I do indeed, if only for socio-psychological reasons. Consider the Eagle-Dukes who live in grandeur: are these men to gnaw quietly at the vitals of an enemy? I could not be so convinced."

Finnerack said curtly, "Theorize as you will. What my instincts assert, I believe."

Food was brought to the table: salt fish stewed in vinegar, coarse bread, a pickle of sea fruits. "The Palasedrans have no concept of gastronomy," Ifness noted. "They eat from hunger. Pleasure, as defined by a Palasedran, is victory over hardship, the assertion of self over environment. The Palasedrans swim at dawn toward the sunrise. When a storm rages, they climb a crag. As a secret accomplishment a man may know five phases of mathematics. The Eagle-Dukes build their own towers with stone they quarry with their own hands; some gather their own food. The Palasedrans know no

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

music; one food is as good as another; they adorn themselves only with the emblems of their guarantors. They are neither cordial nor generous, but they are too proud to be suspicious." Ifness paused, to study first Mialambre, then Etzwane, and finally Finnerack. "The Chancellor will presently arrive. I doubt if he will show much sympathy for your problems. If you have no objection, I will join your group, in the role, let us say, of observer. I have already represented myself as a traveler from Shant."

"As you wish," said Etzwane, despite Finnerack's grunt.

Mialambre said, "Tell us of the planet Earth, the home of our perverse ancestors."

Ifness pursed his lips. "Earth is not a world briefly to be described. We are perhaps overcivilized; our ambitions are no longer large. Our schismatics go forth to the outer worlds; by some miracle we continue to generate adventurers. The human universe constantly expands, and here, if anywhere, is the basic essence of Earth. It is the home world, the source from which all derives."

"Our ancestors left Earth nine thousand years ago," said Mialambre. "They fared through space a vast distance to Durdane, where they thought to be isolated forever. Perhaps now we are no longer remote from other Earth-worlds."

"This is the case," said Ifness. "Durdane still lies beyond the human perimeter, but to no great degree... The Chancellor has arrived. He comes to transact the business of state in this waterfront tavern, and perhaps it is as good a system as any."

The Chancellor stood in the doorway, talking to someone in the street, then he turned and surveyed the room: a man tall and gaunt, with a stubble of gray hair, an enormous crescent of a nose. He wore the usual black gown, but rather than a hat he wore a workman's white shawl about his head.

Etzwane, Finnerack, Mialambre rose to their feet; Ifness sat looking down at the floor as if in sudden reverie.

The Chancellor approached the table. "Please sit down. Our business is simple. Your flyers entered Palasedra; the Black Dragons drove them back. You state that you invaded us to punish the Roguskhoi; these, you further claim, are agents of Palasedra. I say: the Roguskhoi are now on Palasedran soil and Palasedrans shall deal with them. I say: the Roguskhoi are not agents of Palasedra. I say: to send your flyers into Palasedra was a rash and foolish act—indeed, so rash and so foolish that we have held back our hands from sheer astonishment."

Ifness made an approving sign, and uttered a somewhat sententious remark, apparently addressed to no one: "Another aspect of human behavior to confuse and deter our enemies, which is to say, unpredictable forbearance."

The Chancellor frowned aside, not finding in Ifness' approval the exact degree of meek and happy gratitude

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he might have expected. He spoke more sharply. "I say: we shall disregard your acts, insofar as official and purposeful malice seems to be lacking. In the future you must control your flyers. This, in sum, is my statement. I will now hear your response."

Mialambre cleared his throat. "Our presence here speaks for itself. We hope to foster calm and easy relations between our countries, to our mutual benefit. Ignorance induces suspicion; it is not surprising that some of us saw in the Roguskhoi a renewed threat from Palasedra."

Finnerack spoke in a cold voice: "The Brave Free Men and the Flyers of Shant have defeated the Roguskhoi, who thereupon took purposeful refuge in Palasedra. You assert that the Roguskhoi are not your agents. You do not, however, disclaim responsibility for their existence, you who shamelessly breed men to special uses as if they were cattle; if this is the case, the Roguskhoi remain a Palasedran responsibility. They have done vast damage to Shant, and we demand indemnification."

The Chancellor drew back; he had not expected remarks so energetic, nor, for that matter, had Etzwane and Mialambre. Ifness nodded approvingly. "Finnerack's demands are by all accounts justified, if in fact Palasedran responsibility for the Roguskhoi is real. We have heard no official Palasedran statement either admitting or denying such responsibility."

The Chancellor's grizzled eyebrows became a bar across the bridge of his enormous nose. He spoke to Ifness. "I am puzzled by your exact status in this colloquy."

"I am independent counselor," said Ifness. "Gastel Etzwane will endorse my presence, though officially I represent neither Shant nor Palasedra."

The Chancellor said, "It is all the same to me. To make our position absolutely clear, the Palasedrans deny responsibility of any sort whatever for the Roguskhoi."

Finnerack challenged the remark: "Why then do they take refuge in Palasedra? Where did they come from if not Palasedra?"

The Chancellor spoke in a measured voice: "Our most recent intelligence is this: they are creatures sent here from the planet Earth. A spaceship discharged them into the Engh, a remote valley not far from the Salt Bog." Etzwane turned to stare toward Ifness, who looked blandly at the far wall. Finnerack uttered a harsh bark of laughter. The Chancellor went on: "So much we have learned from ahulphs of the neighborhood. The Roguskhoi now return to the Engh. They will not arrive; a force of Palasedran warriors goes now to destroy them. Tomorrow I go to witness the battle and collect further information; accompany me, if you wish."

CHAPTER 15

The Chancellor laid a map upon

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the table and gestured out into the predawn murk. "There is the Engh. From here it appears no more than a defile or a gully. The mountains in fact enclose a large barren meadow, as is evident from the map." The Chancellor tapped a horny fingernail down upon the parchment. "The glider discharged us here; we now stand at this point, overlooking the valley of the River Zek. Troops deploy in yonder forest; they will presently move forward."

"And what of the Roguskhoi?" asked Etzwane.

"The main force has left the Great Salt Bog, and now approaches. The prodromes have already entered the Engh, which we have not disturbed." He peered into the dawn sky. "There is no wind to support the Black Dragons; our reconnaissance is incomplete. As yet I have not been informed of battle plans."

The three suns rolled up into the sky; violet light flooded the valley; the River Zek showed a series of colored glints. Finnerack pointed to the north. "Here come the advance parties. Why do you not harass them on the flank?"

"I am not battle chief," said the Chancellor. "I can supply no opinion. . .Stand back so that we may not be observed."

Scout parties came up the valley at a jog; in the distance a dark mass advanced like a tidal bore.

An instrument at the Chancellor's belt tinkled. He held it to his ear and presently scanned the sky. He returned the instrument to his belt.

The Roguskhoi approached on hulking long strides, features fixed and blank. To the side jogged the chieftains, distinguished by their pectoral bibs of steel chain.

The Chancellor's belt radio jingled; he listened with stern attention, then said, "No alteration of plan."

He returned the radio to his belt and stood a moment looking silently toward the Engh. He said, "Last night the spaceship returned to the Engh. It waits there now, for purposes open to conjecture."

Mialambre spoke sardonically to Ifness. "Can you suggest an explanation for this?"

"Yes," said Ifness. "I can indeed." He asked the Chancellor: "What is the semblance of the spaceship? Have men disembarked? What is its insignia, if any?"

"I learn that the ship is a great round disk. The ports lay open, making ramps to the ground. No one has left the ship. Skirmishers now attack the rear of the column."

An irregular rattle of explosions reached their ears. The Roguskhoi chieftains swung about, then uttered sharp orders; groaning and rumbling, the Roguskhoi broke apart to form battlesquads. The length of the column was now visible. Full-grown warriors marched at front and rear; in the center were imps, bantlings, and perhaps a hundred dazed and haggard women.

From the forest came the blast of a horn; the Palasedran troops moved deliberately forth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Etzwane was perplexed. He had expected gigantic warriors to match the Roguskhoi bulk for bulk; the Palasedran troops were not as tall as himself, immensely broad of shoulder and deep of chest, with arms dangling almost to the ground. The heads hunched low, the eyes peered from under black helmets, seeming to look in two directions. They wore ocher trousers, fiber epaulets and greaves; for weapons they carried sabers, short-handled axes, small shields and dart guns.

The Palasedrans bounded forward at a trot. The Roguskhoi halted, taken aback. The chieftains bawled commands, the squads reformed. The Palasedrans halted; the two armies faced each other, a hundred yards apart.

"A curious confrontation, to be sure," mused Ifness. "Each solution to the problem offers advantages . . . Hmmm. Ogres versus trolls. The weapons I judge equivalent. Tactics and agility, of course, must decide the issue."

The Roguskhoi chieftains called sudden harsh orders; abandoning women and imps, the Roguskhoi warriors ran at a lumbering trot for the Engh. The Palasedrans ran at a converging course, and the armies came together, not face to face, but side to side, the Roguskhoi hacking and slicing, the Palasedrans bounding in and out, chopping, occasionally shooting darts at Roguskhoi eyes, and when occasion offered, tackling the legs of a vulnerable Roguskhoi, to bring the maroon bulk toppling. The scimitars took a corresponding toll; the way became littered with arms, legs, heads and torsos; red blood mingled with black.

The battle reached the mouth of the Engh; and here a second Palasedran army bounded down from the rocks. The Roguskhoi thrust forward, striving to enter the Engh by dint of sheer strength. Behind in the valley remained the women and imps. The women became prey to hysteria. They picked up discarded weapons and slashed at the hopping imps, screaming in maniac delight.

The Roguskhoi warriors had gained the floor of the Engh. Here, with room for their agility, the Palasedrans became more effective.

Finnerack first, with Ifness and Etzwane close behind, then Mialambre and the Chancellor, came over a low wooded ridge and looked down into the Engh, an irregular flat area about a half mile in diameter, carpeted with scrub and blue rock-weed. At the center rested the spaceship: a flattened hemisphere of brown metal two hundred feet in diameter.

Etzwane asked Ifness, "What sort is the spaceship?"

"I don't know." Ifness brought forth his camera and made a series of photographs.

On three sides segments of the hull hung open. Standing in the apertures Etzwane thought to glimpse creatures either andromorphs or men; in the shadows he could not be certain.

In the Engh the battle raged, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Roguskhoi step by step thrusting toward the spaceship, the bibbed chieftains in the van, the rank and file arranged in such a fashion as to protect them from the bounding Palasedrans.

Finnerack gave a grunt of anguish and started down the hill. "Finnerack!" cried Etzwane. "Where are you going?"

Finnerack paid no heed. He broke into a trot. Etzwane set off after him. "Finnerack! Come back here; are you mad?"

Finnerack ran, waving his arms toward the spaceship. His eyes bulged wide-open, but he did not appear to see; he stumbled, and Etzwane was on him. He clutched Finnerack's waist, pulled back. "What are you doing? Have you gone insane?"

Finnerack groaned, kicked, fought; he drove his elbows into Etzwane's face.

Ifness stepped forward to strike to smart blows; Finnerack fell numbly back.

"Quick, or they'll kill us from the ship," said Ifness.

Mialambre and Ifness took Finnerack's arms, Etzwane his legs; they carried him back into the shelter of the trees. Using Finnerack's garments, Ifness tied his ankles and wrists.

In the Engh the Palasedrans, wary of the spaceship, drew back. Up the ramps marched the surviving Roguskhoi chieftains and a hundred warriors. The ports snapped shut. Like a glow-beetle, the ship took on a silver luminescence. Emitting a rasping squeal, it rose into the sky and presently was gone.

The Roguskhoi remaining in the valley moved slowly to the spot where the spaceship had rested; here they formed a rough circle, to stand at bay. The chieftains had departed; of the copper horde which had almost overwhelmed Shant less than a thousand survived.

The Palasedrans, drawing back, formed a pair of lines, to the right and left of the Roguskhoi; they stood quietly, awaiting orders. For ten minutes the armies surveyed each other, soberly, without signal of hostility; then the Palasedrans withdrew to the edge of the Engh, and retired up the slope. The Roguskhoi remained at the center of the valley.

The Chancellor made a signal to the men of Shant. "We now adopt our original strategy. The Roguskhoi are sealed into the Engh, and they will never escape. Even your blue-eyed madman must concede the Roguskhoi to be offworld creatures."

Ifness said, "As to this there was never any doubt. The purpose for the incursion remains a mystery. If a conventional conquest were the plan, why were the Roguskhoi armed only with scimitars? Can folk who fly space contrive no better weapons? It seems unreasonable on the face of the matter."

"Evidently they took us lightly," said the Chancellor. "Or perhaps they thought to test us. If so, we have dealt them harsh instruction."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"These conjectures are reasonable," Ifness said. "There is still much to be learned. Certain of the Roguskhoi chieftains were killed. I suggest that you convey these corpses to one of your medical laboratories and there perform investigations, in which I would wish to participate."

The Chancellor made a curt gesture. "The effort is unnecessary."

Ifness drew the Chancellor aside and spoke a few calm sentences, and now the Chancellor gave grudging agreement to Ifness' proposals.

CHAPTER 16

In a state of sullen apathy Finnerack marched back down the valley. Several times Etzwane started to speak to him; each time, eerie and sick at heart, he held his tongue. Mialambre, less imaginative, asked Finnerack, "Do you realize that your act, sane or the reverse, imperiled us all?"

Finnerack made no response; Etzwane wondered if even he heard.

Ifness said in a grave voice, "The best of us at times act upon odd impulses."

Finnerack said nothing.

Etzwane had expected to be flown back across the Great Salt Bog; the black glider however took them south to Chemaoue, where the man-powered carriage conveyed them once again to the dour inn at the harbor. The chambers were as cheerless as the refectory, with couches of stone cushioned only by thin sour-smelling pads. Through the open window came a draught of cool salt air and the sound of harbor water.

Etzwane passed a cheerless night, during which he was not aware of having slept. Gray-violet light finally entered the high window. Etzwane arose, rinsed his face with cold water, and went down to the common room, where he was presently joined by Mialambre. Ifness and Finnerack failed to appear. When Etzwane went to investigate, he found their chambers vacant.

At noon Ifness returned to the inn. Etzwane anxiously inquired in regard to Finnerack. Ifness replied with care and deliberation. "Finnerack, if you remember, displayed a peculiar irresponsibility. Last night he departed the inn and set off along the shore. I had anticipated something of the sort and asked that he be kept under surveillance. Last night therefore he was taken into custody. I have been with the Palasedran authorities all morning and they have, I believe, discovered the source of Finnerack's odd conduct."

The rancor which Etzwane had once felt in connection with the secretive Ifness began to return. "What did they find out—and how?"

"Best perhaps, that you come with me and see for yourself."

Ifness spoke in a casual voice: "The Palasedrans are now convinced that the spaceship is not a product of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Earth. I naturally could have told them as much, in the process betraying my own background."

Mialambre asked irritably. "Where then did the spaceship originate?"

"I am as anxious to learn this as yourself—in fact I work on Durdane to this end. Since the Earth-worlds lie beyond the Schiafarilla, the spaceship presumably comes from the general direction opposite, toward the center of the galaxy. It is a sort I have never seen before."

"You informed the Palasedrans of all this?"

"By no means. Their opinions were altered by this morning's events. The Roguskhoi chieftains, if you recall, wore a protective bib; this aroused my curiosity. . .Here are the laboratories."

Etzwane felt a thrill of horror. "This is where they brought Finnerack?"

"It seemed a sensible procedure."

They entered a building of black stone smelling strong of chemical reeks. Ifness led the way with assurance, along a side corridor, into a large chamber illuminated by an array of skylights. Tanks and vats stood to right and left; tables ran down the middle. At the far end four Palasedrans in gray smocks considered the bulk of a dead Roguskhoi. Ifness gave a nod of approval. "They commence a new investigation. . .It may be profitable for you to watch."

Etzwane and Mialambre approached and stood by the wall. The Palasedrans worked without haste, arranging the hulk to best advantage . . .Etzwane looked about the room. A pair of large brown insects, or crustaceans, moved inside two glass jars. Glass tanks displayed floating organs, molds and fungus, a swarm of small white worms, a dozen unnamable objects. . .The Palasedrans, using an air-driven circular saw, sliced into the great chest. . . They worked five minutes with great dexterity. Etzwane began to feel an almost unbearable tension; he turned away. Ifness however was intent. "Now watch."

With deftness and delicacy the Palasedrans extracted a white sac the size of two clenched fists. A pair of heavy trailing tendons, or nerves, appeared to lead up into the neck. The Palasedrans carefully cut channels into the dark flesh, through bone and cartilage, to draw forth the cords intact. The entire organ now lay on the table. Suddenly it evinced a squirming life of its own. The white sac broke away; out crawled a glossy brown creature, something between a spider and a crab. The Palasedrans at once clapped it into a bottle and placed it on the shelf beside its two fellows.

"There you see your true enemy," said Ifness. "Sajarano of Sershan, during our conversations, used the word 'asutra.' Its intelligence appears to be of the highest order."

In horrified fascination Etzwane went to stare into the bottle. The creature was gnarled and convoluted like a small brown brain; eight jointed legs left the underside of the body, each terminating in three

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strong little palps. The long fibers, or nerves, extended from one end through a cluster of sensory organs.

"From my brief acquaintance with the asutra," said Ifness, "I deduce it to be a parasite; or better perhaps, the directive half of a symbiosis, though I am certain that in its native environment it uses neither creatures like the Roguskhoi nor yet men for its hosts."

Etzwane spoke in a voice he found hard to control. "You have seen these before?"

"A single specimen only: that which I took from Sajarano."

A dozen questions pushed into Etzwane's mind; grisly suspicions that he did not know how to voice and perhaps did not wish verified. He put Sajarano of Sershan and his pathetic mangled corpse out of his mind. He looked from one bottle to the other, and though he could not identify eyes or visual organs, he had the disturbing sense of scrutiny.

"They are highly evolved and specialized," stated Ifness. "Still, like man, they exhibit a surprising hardihood and no doubt can survive even in the absence of their hosts.

Etzwane asked, "What then of Finnerack?"—although he knew the answer to the question even before he asked.

"This," said Ifness, tapping one of the bottles, "was the asutra which occupied the body of Jerd Finnerack."

"He is dead?"

"He is dead. How could he be alive?

"Once again," said Ifness in a nasal voice of intense boredom, "you insist that I render you information regarding matters either not essentially your concern, or which you might ascertain independently. Still, I will in this case make a concession and perhaps ease your agonies of bewilderment.

"As you know, I was ordered off the planet Durdane by representatives of the Historical Institute, who felt that I had acted irresponsibly. I forcefully asserted my opinions; I won others to my point of view and was sent back to Durdane in a new capacity.

"I returned at once to Garwiy, where I satisfied myself that you had acted with energy and decision. In short, the men of Shant, given leadership, reacted to the threat with ordinary human resource."

"But why the Roguskhoi in the first place? Why should they attack the folk of Shant? Is it not extraordinary?"

"By no means. Durdane is an isolated world of men, where experiments with human populations can be discreetly performed. The asutra appear to be anticipating an eventual contact between their realm and the Earth-worlds; perhaps they have had unhappy experiences in the past.

"Remember, they are parasites; they will try to effect their aims through proxies. First then, they attempt an antihuman simulacrum which impregnates human females and in the process renders them

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sterile: a biological weapon in fact, which man has often used against insect pests.

"Their remarkable creation is the Roguskhoi. Certainly hundreds, perhaps thousands, of men and women have known the asutra laboratories, a thought to haunt your dark nights. The asutra must consider their creatures acceptable human replicas, which of course they are not; the more subtle human gaze recognizes them for monsters at once; still, biologically, they fulfill their function.

"To insure a meaningful experiment, the Roguskhoi must be accorded a period of noninterference; hence the Anome has a monitor implanted in his body, and his Benevolences fare no better. By a system not at all clear, the asutra control the activities of their hosts. Sajarano complained of his "secret soul," "the voice of his soul"; I recall Finnerack mentioning his conscience. No doubt the asutra learned to admonish men in their laboratories.

"The Roguskhoi, as weapons, were faulty; the essential concept was a fallacy. Once the artificial passivity of the Anome had ended, the men of Shant reacted with ordinary human energy. No doubt the asutra could have supplied weapons and subjugated Shant, but this was not their purpose; they wished to test and perfect indirect techniques.

"Suppose the men could be induced to destroy each other? This concept, or so I suspect—here I am on uncertain ground—led to the planting of a control in Finnerack. His pugnacity was reinforced; he was compelled to challenge the Palasedrans—an act not at all contrary to his own instincts.

"This second experiment likewise led to failure, although in principle it seems a more reasonable tactic. There was insufficient preparation; I suspect the scheme to be a hasty improvisation."

"All very well," said Mialambre with a scowl, "but why should Finnerack be used rather than say, Gastel Etzwane, who has always wielded more real influence?"

"At one time Finnerack looked to be a man of irresistible power," said Ifness. "He controlled the Intelligence Agency and also commanded the Brave Free Men. His star was on the rise, and so he certified his doom."

"This is the case," admitted Mialambre. "In fact, I can fix upon the precise time of his alteration. He disappeared three days. . ." His voice dwindled; his eyes shifted toward Etzwane.

A heavy silence came over the chamber.

Etzwane brought his clenched fists slowly down on the table. "So it must be. The asutra have altered me as well."

"Interesting!" remarked Ifness. "You are conscious of strange voices, agonizing pangs, a constant sense of discontent and unease? These were the symptoms which eventually drove Sajarano to suicide."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I know none of these. Nevertheless I was drugged precisely as was Finnerack. The same Parthans were on hand. I am doomed, but I die with my goals achieved. Let us go to the laboratory and have an end to the business."

Ifness made a reassuring sign. "Conditions are not so bad as you fear. I suspected that such an effort might be made upon you and was on hand to thwart the attempt. In fact, I occupied a suite in the Hrindiana precisely beside your own. The attempt failed; the Parthans died; the asutra went to Earth in a jar, and you awoke three days later tired and bewildered, but none the worse for all that."

Etzwane sank back into his seat.

Ifness continued. "In Shant the asutra have suffered a small but significant defeat. Their experiments have gained them precisely that attention they sought to avoid, thanks to the alertness of the Historical Institute. What have we learned? That the asutra either expect or prepare for antagonistic relations with the human race. Perhaps a collision between a pair of expanding world-systems is at last imminent. . .Here comes the Chancellor, no doubt to announce that your glider is ready. As for me, I have eaten salt fish once too often, and if you permit, I will accompany you to Shant. . ."

FULL COLOR PRINTS OF F&SF COVERS

COVERS BY BONESTELL, HUNTER, WALOTSKY, AND OTHERS

These beautiful full color proofs of F&SF are without overprinting: they are mailed flat and are suitable for framing.

$1.00 for one color print
3.00 for four different color prints
5.00 for eight different color prints
10.00 for twenty different color prints

FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION, P.O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753. I enclose $___ ($1.00 for one, $3.00 for four, $5.00 for eight or $10.00 for twenty.)

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

(Requests for specific covers will be filled when available, but supply is limited so please give alternates. This month's cover is available.)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A fresh and convincing tale about the results of a human-alien intermarriage, from the author of THE LEMON EATERS and, most recently, THE SPUN SUGAR HOLE (Simon & Schuster).

Jelna

by JERRY SOHL

THIS LEVEL-ONE TAPE CONtains all material immediately relevant to the case of THE PEOPLE VS. RAYMOND SHAW, S-15. It includes basic references and addenda. All extraneous material has been deleted, and the testimony of the defendant condensed and/or edited.

Testimony of RAYMOND SHAW: The first time I knew there was something wrong with Fenley (Pierson) was when we went to the game preserve and hunted chromos.

Game Preserve: An area of indeterminate size simulating natural conditions provided by Stability for atavists and for various recreational purposes.

Chromos: Colored animals laboratory-created to varying indices of animal cunning and maneuverability and implanted with electronic recording devices for use in game preserves and usually hunted with low-power stunners. Chromos revive immediately after telemetry.

RAYMOND SHAW: Fenley bagged three green and didn't even try for more, which was strange for Fenley. But, then, when he chided me as usual about my low score (two yellows and a lowly blue), I thought nothing of it.

Fenley had always loved excitement and danger—especially the hunt—and as an S-15 I was able to get him entry even though he wasn't a patient.

S-15: A grade in the Stability Service in the higher echelons but not yet supervisory.

SHAW: Fenley invariably went after the larger, more ferocious greens. The last time we had hunted was before Fenley was sent by Q-Division to spend a year on Vanika-7 and returned with Jelna, whom he had married there.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Q-Division: A branch of General Accounting.

Vanika-7: A recently colonized planet of the Capella group.

SHAW: Yet, as we stood in front of the results console, jungle steam rising about us and making our shirts stick to our backs, Fenley again behaved strangely. He could not recall our previous hunt.

(Shaw was asked to elaborate.)

SHAW: Well, he had pressed for totals, and when they flashed on, I saw that I'd made 26 and Fenley an even 50. That's when I remarked that at least it wasn't as bad as the last time we'd been there when I'd hit several pinks and yellows for a lowly 21. At that time he'd got more than four times as much as I.

(Shaw was asked to use the scene simulator.)

Fenley turned from the console to me, blinked, looked vacant-eyed. "It must have been somebody else, Ray," he said. "I've never been here with you before." Then he wrenched around, wiped away the sweat that was threatening to run into his eyes, and headed for the exit.

SHAW: After a cold shower, we stopped for a drink at the clubhouse bar, and I tried to jog his memory by telling him—

(He was asked to use the scene simulator.)

I sipped my drink and turned to him casually, saying, "I remember the last time, Fen, whether you do or not. I bagged a few pinks and yellows and you got over a hundred, which is pretty high for this particular preserve."

He looked at me steadily. Then he said gently, "You're wrong, Ray."

"Hey, you couldn't possibly forget a thing like that. Besides, you've kidded me often enough about it."

He regarded me in a bewildered way, as if trying to decide how to handle me. Then he smiled wryly, shook his head. "Believe me, you've got me confused with another kidder. Tell me: Why would I forget a thing like that?"

SHAW: Why, indeed? But I didn't say it. I just said I didn't know and finished my drink. I remember wondering if he was making a transition.

Transition: Changing a life style or behavior, permissible with an S-Guide. Without an S-Guide the subject usually ends up in trouble with his wife, family, division, or with Stability itself, with accompanying detention, examination and a permanent affix to the record.

Stability: That branch of the government concerned therapeutically with the happiness of the citizenry.

SHAW: But, later, when we had returned to the city where Jelna had prepared a marvelous

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

meal, she asked us how it had gone, and Fenley surprised me by replying that he was going to have to watch me, I had got almost half what he did this time, a lot different from the last time we'd been hunting together.

(Shaw was asked why he did not mention this deviation.)

SHAW: It was such a pleasant evening I didn't want to spoil it by bringing it up. Besides, if I'd done that, I'd have also been obligated to report it and that would have meant a stability scan.

Stability Scan: A cursory mental examination to determine a citizen's emotional balance using a standard Kenvac Ego Function Evaluator.

SHAW: So I went along with it, grinned and said Fenley was right and smiled at Jelna as she filled my glass and had the satisfaction of watching her smile in return.

(Preliminary testimony is cited which quotes Shaw as saying he was in love with Jelna.)

SHAW: Yes, I was as much in love with Jelna as Fenley was. I never mentioned it, but I knew they were aware of it, particularly Jelna, for it is difficult to keep such a secret from a woman.

Fenley was a lucky man, not because he was one of the first to be allowed to marry an alien or the first female Vanikan, but because he married Jelna. Of course I realized he was really lucky because of the Birkdahl Covenant.

Birkdahl Covenant: An agreement with spatial powers which ended years of questions of intermarriage. The only prerequisite was that the union had to be between biologically compatible individuals.

SHAW: If the conservatives had had their way, I would never have met Jelna, and I have often thought of what a tragedy that would have been, except that the reality of it was tragic enough: she belonged to Fenley and not to me.

(He was asked to describe Jelna.)

SHAW: Jelna was a beautiful woman. Her fine hair was jet black, her larger-than-life eyes were wide set and dark blue, and she moved with such feline grace that she must have been the envy of all Earth women.

Fenley told me all Vanikans had a mane that went down the spine from the neck, ending in a vestigial tail, but that the hair had been removed and the tail excised before they started for Earth. I thought at first he was kidding, for Fenley dearly loved a wry gibe, but Jelna herself told me it was true.

Her beauty was not all that was Jelna. She was a wonderful person, full of charm, had a delightfully odd way of referring to things; and her speech was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

peculiarly liquid, giving an inflection to words never heard on Earth before. She also had a loving quality of listening to what you had to say, as if you were the only thing important in her life. Many times I thought of making a trip to Vanika to see if I could find another Jelna, but travel is not my forte, and Stability is earthbound.

(He was asked if he could describe Fenley and Jelna in one word.)

SHAW: Inseparable.

(He was asked to elaborate.)

SHAW: They were the happiest couple I ever saw, very devoted and considerate of each other. That is why what happened to Fenley is so tragic. No wife ever loved a man more, and certainly no wife was more understanding. And Fenley, though he must have been increasingly debilitated, always managed to shape up when Jelna was around. And Jelna, though terribly distraught about him, did not worry him with it.

(He was asked about Roger Umbraugh, who was mentioned in previous testimony.)

SHAW: I hadn't realized how much time I'd been giving Fenley and Jelna until Roger Umbraugh jokingly asked me when I was going to move in with them. Roger was in an allied service and his atavistic index was so high that hunting therapy had been prescribed.

Atavistic Index: The degree to which man secretly or openly wants to revert to primitive states. Genogenic.

Genogenic: (Behavior) Transmitted through genes.

SHAW: I had been hunting with Roger many times, but now, even though I knew he was jesting, there was an edge of envy to his voice, for I knew Roger liked Jelna, too, since we had discussed her many times. My reply was not civil, and instantly we both knew why: I really would have liked to move in with Fenley and Jelna.

It was then that we realized what was happening to me, and so for my sake Roger and I went on a week's safari in one of the bigger preserves, and we did not mention Jelna nor Fenley once—until the annunciator call.

Annunciator: A telephonic device placed in a strategic place in a difficult area.

SHAW: It was on the fifth day on the bush veldt when a nearby annunciator began buzzing and flashing. I answered at once, since that's the rule. It was Fenley. He'd placed an urgent priority call and sounded terrible, his voice full of panic and despair, so unlike him. He wanted to see me at once. My first thought was something had happened to Jelna, but I couldn't get any sense out of him, and so I apologized to Roger and called for a flier.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(He was asked to use the scene simulator.)

I found Fenley waiting in my apartment, pale and shaken. He was so involved inside himself he just sat there staring at me with hollow eyes. He hadn't shaved and his hands shook. I got him some brandy and tried talking to him, and even though I saw parts of him coming back, he wouldn't reply.

"Come on, Fen," I said finally, "you can talk. So tell me." When he didn't answer, I said, "You did call me, didn't you?"

He looked down at his drink. Then he closed his eyes and began to sob quietly, his shoulders shaking.

"What is it?" I went to him, put a hand on his shoulder to steady him. This only seemed to make him worse; so I drew away.

I could see how wretched and unnerved he was, and so I was glad when he finally managed to gather himself together and looked at me. I could see the fright behind his eyes. "I'm losing my mind," he said, looking like a man lost, a man without a friend. "I really am. I can't remember things any more."

"Things like what?"

"Coming here, for example. Calling you, as you said I did. I feel terrible. I've been having horrible dreams."

"For how long?"

"Oh, off and on, but it's never been this bad." He put his hands over his eyes and shook his head.

SHAW: How he felt came rushing out then, and I thought it was good that the dam had burst. I asked him where Jelna was, and he told me she was at the medcenter for her fourth total scan.

Total Scan: A combined medical and stability appraisal (required of all aliens every six months under the Birkdahl Covenant). Total scan takes three days.

SHAW: But it was Fenley I was really worried about, and so I made a Priority B Basic appointment at the medcenter for a physical scan only. I thought his trouble was functional, but, as is the rule, I had to eliminate organic initially, and as his friend I wanted to treat the functional difficulty. After I dropped Fenley off for his checkup, I looked in on Jelna. With my rating, this was possible.

(He was asked to use the scene simulator.)

I found Jelna almost as wan as Fenley when I visited her in her room. She sat up when she saw me.

"How's Fenley?" she asked right away.

I told her. She sank back. "I knew something was wrong," she said glumly. "They told me he's been trying to reach me

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

here. But you know the rules." She gave me a woebegone look, and my heart went out to her.

I knew about the rules. They weren't fair. For aliens, no human contact except professional. I shouldn't have been there myself, since I was not there in any professional capacity.

She reached out, placed a fine-boned hand on my arm. "Thank you for what you did for Fenley." She smiled bleakly. "I'll be out in the morning and stay with him."

SHAW: Physically, they could find nothing wrong with Fenley. Then it was my turn. I could find nothing wrong when I gave him a stab scan. This puzzled me. It puzzled Jelna, too, and she regarded me oddly, for she had only my word for his behavior. Fenley was simply his old self and had evidently forgotten the episode or didn't want to mention it. Or—and this thought struck me hard—he was putting on a show for Jelna. But then why were the instrument readings all perfectly normal? There was nothing else to do but accept what results I saw, stop wondering, and content myself with the fact that, whatever Fenley had, he did not have it now.

(He was asked when he next noticed anything wrong.)

SHAW: It was in the middle of the next week. Jelna called to invite me to dine with them. Their apartment was near the top of one of the bigger residential complexes and presented a magnificent view of the city, and Jelna had decorated it in such an unusual and fetching way that it was impossible to be downhearted in it. She had arranged colorful living vines and flowers in long planters, and she had painted one wall in such warm, gorgeous bursts of colors that the place vibrated with life.

(He was asked to use the scene simulator.)

When I arrived it took Fenley a long time to answer the door, and when he did he looked at me without recognition.

"Aren't you going to invite me in?"

He blinked, stepped aside, looked at me curiously.

I walked past him. "Where's Jelna?" I asked, not seeing her and turning to him. He was still standing at the half-opened door looking uncertain and dazed.

"You know Jelna, then," he said.

Before I could recover my shock, Jelna came in, greeted me with a warm smile, her arms full of groceries. "I've been shopping," she said gaily—almost too gaily, I thought. "I always seem to leave things to the last minute." She kissed Fenley, who closed the door.

Fenley grinned at me. "Drink, Ray?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I could only stand and stare at him dumbly and say, "Sure," trying to understand this startling change.

While Fenley was making drinks, I excused myself, went to the kitchen, and told Jelna I was worried about him. I explained what had just happened.

Tears filled her eyes. "I know. Last week his supervisor called and wanted to know if anything was wrong at home. What is it, Ray?"

"I don't know." I wished with all my heart I could have thought of something else to say.

She dabbed at her eyes. "Sometimes he has to call me about things he's forgotten. He doesn't want to talk about it afterwards, though."

"He's trying to keep you from worrying." I only hoped it was true.

Just then Fenley came in with the drinks. He looked chipper and full of the devil. I couldn't understand it. He was that way the whole evening, laughing, pretending nothing was wrong. Neither Jelna nor I wanted to bring up anything that would ruin the good feeling.

SHAW: Two days later Jelna called and said she was going to the coast to appear on a program which involved other aliens from the far reaches who had married Earth men or women. She asked me to look in on Fenley while she was gone. I said I would.

That night I had dinner with Roger Umbraugh, but the next night I wanted to be with Fenley, and so I called him. There was no answer.

The next day, since there still was no answer, I went to see him. There was no answer to my ring or knock. I explained to the building supervisor that Fenley was a patient of mine and I showed him my S-15 status credentials; so I got the apartment key and let myself in.

I found Fenley where he must have been ever since Jelna left for the coast: in bed. He had not shaved or eaten, his face was a sheen of sweat, his eyes sunken and glazed over. He did not answer to his name.

I had him rushed to the medcenter, then lost no time tracking down Jelna, summoning her home. By the time she arrived, Fenley was dead.

(He was asked to use the scene simulator, but he declined.)

SHAW: I don't remember those events that well. I mean it's not that clear. I remember comforting Jelna as much as I could as a friend, and I tried not to think of what Fenley's death made possible for me.

(He was asked to describe her reactions.)

SHAW: She was beside herself with grief, which, as an S-15, I can tell you is normal in such cases. She also said she

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could not bear to stay in the apartment where she and Fenley had had so many wonderful times. That, too, was normal.

(He was again asked to use the scene simulator.)

"Ray, Ray, what am I going to do?" she sobbed. She had moved to me and now clung close.

I found myself putting my arms around her and holding her. I don't know how long I held her before I found myself saying, "I have a spare bedroom."

(He was asked for his reaction after she moved in.)

SHAW: I was acutely conscious of her presence every minute she was there.

(He was asked who brought up the subject of marriage.)

SHAW: I did.

(He was asked to elaborate.)

SHAW: Well, we both knew she couldn't stay there forever without sharing things, and I thought we both also knew how I felt about her. It's just that at that time I wasn't absolutely sure, it being possible now. So one day when she was saying she didn't know what she would do with her life, she felt so lost, I impassionedly told her I wanted her to share it with me.

(He was asked to use the scene simulator.)

She turned and literally flew into my arms with tears of joy. She sobbed, her head against my chest.

"Oh, Ray!" She was quite overcome. Then, when she had recovered some, she said, "I had so hoped you would ask me that." She drew away and blew her nose into a tiny handkerchief.

I was overcome myself and couldn't say anything. I just stood there watching her. In a moment she turned, gave me a little smile, then a moue. *Then she wet her lips and came to me seductively. She kissed me tenderly on the lips and held my face between her hands. She could have done what she would with me at that moment.*

She said softly, "Ray, I want you to know that with you I feel a real kinship—what you call love. I have this feeling for no other Earthman." Once again she seemed to have difficulty containing herself, and so she moved against me, clung to me. I think she was trying not to cry.

It hadn't been until that moment that I realized how deeply and completely Jelna loved.

I was happy. I had never been happier.

SHAW: We had a quiet ceremony a few days later with only a few of my friends in attendance. I did not think it strange that Jelna had no friends to invite.

Roger Umbraugh was there, and he told me what a lucky man I was, and he looked at Jelna

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

enviously as he told me so, for Jelna was radiantly beautiful, more so I think than when she first arrived with Fenley.

I don't think two people were ever happier, though I did remember Jelna and Fenley, but I tried not to make any comparison. I just thought we both became more in love with each other every day. I found in Jelna everything I imagined she would be. There is one thing you can say about Jelna, and that is that her love for me never diminished even for a moment.

We were invited everywhere, for people sensed our happiness and wanted to share it with us. I was the envy of the men, Jelna the women.

It was after we had been married for about three months that I found her looking at me oddly. And there were times now when we might just as easily have done things separately, but Jelna insisted we do them together. I felt I knew why: She did not want me out of her sight because she was afraid she might lose me the way she did Fenley.

It was, in fact, because of this fear of separation that I made her my assistant in the Stability Service. That way I made sure she would be even closer to me.

I had no idea, of course, of what a calamity this closeness was, that it would end as it did.

(He was asked to use the scene simulator.)

I had often volunteered to buy groceries and to go out for things, but Jelna would not hear of it. I was king; she would run the errands. Actually, I thought the separations, short as they were, were a good thing. Two people should not be together every minute of their lives.

That is why I was alone in the apartment one evening when the doorbell rang.

When I opened the door, I saw standing there a beefy man I'd never seen before, a man with a ruddy face, blond mustache that gave him a mischievous look, and bright merry eyes. An unusual-looking man who was giving me a wide smile. All I could do was stare, wondering who he could be and what he wanted. I even thought for a moment he was intoxicated and had come to the wrong apartment.

It was an awkward moment, and the man must have felt it. His smile faded a little. He said, "Hey, buddy!"

"I'm sorry," I said with annoyance, "but you've got the wrong buddy. Just who are you looking for?"

The man looked startled, stepped back a pace, then surprised me by walking past me into the apartment before I could stop him. He flopped into a chair and looked at me in the strangest way. He said, "I see, I see."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I thought he was a good candidate for a stab scan, and I was just angry enough to tell him so when Jelna came home with the groceries, letting herself in and saying gaily, "You're a little early for dinner, Roger." She was full of dazzling smiles.

Memory pulsed back into me as Roger Umbraugh said, "I'm sorry," in a dull voice, never taking his worried eyes off me.

Jelna's smile was losing its brilliance. She lowered the groceries to a nearby table, looking from Roger to me.

"Darling," she said, moving to me.

All I could do was look at Roger's face, the face that had been that of a stranger only moments before, and I knew this was only the beginning of it, and I wondered when the dreams would start and how I would feel when Jelna went for her routine total scan and I would be left alone.

(He was asked if he killed Jelna.)

SHAW: No, I didn't kill her. In the Stability Service we have access to drugs, yes, but Jelna, as my assistant, also had access to the same drugs.

(He was asked if she killed herself.)

SHAW: Yes, she did.

(The defendant broke down, and the court recessed briefly.)

(He was asked why he thought she killed herself.)

SHAW: Because she loved me.

(He was asked what happened to him immediately after her death.)

SHAW: I almost died. At least a large part of me died. For five months I was near death in the medcenter before my memory and strength started to come back. I don't believe I will ever achieve my previous level of professional competence.

(He was asked for his opinion about his strange relationship with the deceased.)

SHAW: Jelna and I—I think we had become symbionts of a sort, just as she and Fenley had, except that it was not in a strict biological and psychological sense, and neither was it advantageous to either Fenley or me. Besides, Jelna was in no way affected. As it happened to Fenley, eventually it would have happened to me; I would have become nothing without her in my immediate vicinity. I'm sure it was this that Jelna saw and what made her see that she could not continue without ultimate tragedy to us both.

(He was asked if he thought he would have died.)

SHAW: Yes, I'm sure of it. In a few months I probably would have died at the first prolonged separation.

Verdict: It was the consensus that Raymond Shaw, S-15, was not guilty.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ADDENDA

One: The court recommended a change in the Birkdahl Covenent.

Two: Three years after the trial of THE PEOPLE VS. RAYMOND SHAW, S-15, the Birkdahl Covenant was amended to exclude spatial marriages that proved to be physically or mentally detrimental to any species, even if biological union was possible.

COLLECTOR'S ITEMS: Autographed Special Issues

Special Fritz Leiber Issue — July 1969

Featuring "Ship of Shadows," a complete short novel by Fritz Leiber, Hugo award winner, 1970. Plus profile, bibliography. Cover by Ed Emsh. We have 100 copies only, all signed by Fritz Leiber.

Special Poul Anderson Issue — April 1971

Featuring "The Queen of Air and Darkness," a complete short novel by Poul Anderson, Nebula award winner, 1972. Plus profile, critical essay, bibliography. Cover by Kelly Freas.

We have approximately 100 copies remaining of a total of 200 copies signed by Poul Anderson.

All copies are in excellent condition. Please send $2.00 for each issue to:

MERCURY PRESS, Inc., P. O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In which Ron Goulart, breaking new ground, as always, considers the problem of the bored, lonely suburban housewife, extrapolates it into the 1990's and, further, comes up with a solution! Mr. Goulart's most recent book is CHEAP THRILLS: AN INFORMAL HISTORY OF THE PULP MAGAZINES, out in the Fall from Arlington House.

Gigolo

by RON GOULART

HIS SAMPLE CASE BEGAN singing just as he stepped into the android showroom. Bruce Tumey dropped the case next to a light strip signboard and kicked it a couple of good ones. More of the tok-discs inside the sample case commenced singing. Most of them were singing the song that explained the St. Louis Zoo, with a few others singing the guided tour of West Point. Bruce grabbed up the sample case, then dropped it hard on the noryl-pastic floor of the android store.

The tok-discs went on singing, and the light strip signboard flashed on, its voice box announcing, "10-speed gigolos! Just in from Rome! Ask about them!"

Kneeling, Bruce stuck the fingers of his right hand into the holes in the sample case whorl lock. He was a middle-sized dark-haired man of thirty-three, dressed in a one-piece jaunting suit. The case lid popped open, jerking his hand with it. After extracting his fingers, Bruce thrust his hand into the open case and began clicking off each of the five dozen tok-discs. "West Point has been the seat of the United States Military Academy since 1802," sang the donut-size disc in his hand.

Behind him a throat was cleared. "Can I show you a gigolo?"

Bruce glanced back. "That cough sounded very believable, almost human."

"The marmoset is a small arboreal monkey," sang another disc before Bruce got it flicked off.

The plump blond salesman said, "Why shouldn't it sound human? I am human. I'm a living, breathing human being, much as yourself."

Bruce abandoned his sample

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

case and stood up. He studied the plump salesman. "You're not scamming me?"

"I'm all too human," replied the salesman. "Did you ever see an android fifty pounds overweight, with smog-asthma?"

"I guess not," admitted Bruce. "The thing is, people can sense right away I'm sort of gullible. It's my only negative quality, according to the rating computer at work. That and a slight tendency toward flatulence."

"There's another thing an android can't do," said the plump salesman. "You never see an android fart."

"You're right," agreed Bruce. He was only here in the Sexur, Inc., store to set up part of an alibi. He didn't want a big frumus. "I guess I'm overcompensating for my guillibility. Like this morning I was in Osijek, Yugoslavia, and one of our clients tried to scam me about. . ."

"You get to travel in your work?"

"I'm with ConSon over in Bridgeport. We're a subsidiary of Uni-Glom. I get to most places in the world."

"How's all that teleporting affect you?"

"You get used to it." A tok-disc started to recite Yugoslavian poetry. Bruce bent to click it off. "I'll tell you why I stopped in this afternoon."

The salesman rubbed his plump palms on the sides of his plyotrousers. "Okay, let's get down to business. Now, perhaps you're a little shy about buying a gigolo for your wife. For a man in your line of work, one where you have to jaunt a lot, a surrogate android can help hold a marriage together. I know in my own case. . ."

"Oh, we already have an andy gigolo," said Bruce. "Had, rather." Right now the android was in an alley in Muzaffarpur, India. But Bruce wasn't supposed to know that.

"Has yours broken down?"

"Wandered off." Bruce shook his head. "I'm quite upset. We've had Cesar for nearly two years, and my wife, naturally, is quite fond of him."

"You didn't buy him here. Our androids don't stray."

"Cesar was a gift from some relatives of my wife's," said Bruce. "He's a nice mechanism, but quirky."

"I don't like to pry, but don't you keep him turned off when he's not in use."

"Not always," said Bruce. "Cesar has become a friend to both of us."

"Really?" The salesman nodded his chubby head. "Most men never take to these android surrogates completely. They buy them in the first place because the wife keeps at them. A true camaraderie, though, never

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

builds. Some of your men, in fact, insist the gigolo is turned off an hour before they're due home. They don't want to see that andy at work at all."

"Imagine," said Bruce, grinning. "Jealous of a piece of machinery. Well, Cesar and I were great buddies. He's very well-read and a nut about sports. Especially lawn tennis, which used to be my favorite until I got too busy. Actually, the other day in Vaasa, Finland, I had time to squeeze in a game."

The salesman strolled over to a display platform where a gigolo sat alone at a restaurant table for two, a wine glass raised to his believable-looking lips. "This is one of the new Japanese models," he said, pointing. "I assume, seeing as you're well-adjusted and liberal-minded, you want a fully equipped gigolo. One with a full set of private parts."

"Sure," said Bruce. Was it in Muzaffarpur they still had those packs of wild dogs that roamed the streets? They might be tearing Cesar to shreds right now, scattering cogs and vinyl flesh and fine-coiled springs all over the alley. "We believe in going first cabin."

"A healthy attitude. Some of my customers can't get used to the idea that a woman, left alone in the suburban wilderness, needs male companionship during the day. Companionship from a complete male." He sighed. "You know. I still sell an awful lot of gigolos with no organs at all. The guys who buy them figure their lonely, restless wives will settle for a little hand holding and poetry reading, with maybe some bicycling on the side." The salesman gestured at an android across the room. "For some reason, lately I've even had a run on accordion-playing gigolos."

Bruce had all his sample tok-discs turned off. He grinned at the Sexur, Inc., salesman. "Some guys never get over a sort of boyish jealousy, I guess," he said. "They know their wives need male companionship while they're away, but they won't admit that includes a little... well, a certain amount of..."

"Screwing," supplied the salesman. "Let's be open about it. With a fully equipped android gigolo you provide your wife with everything she misses when you're out. Including a roll in the hay now and again. Do you know the incidence of adultery has dropped 32 percent here in Connecticut since 1990?"

"In only four years? Amazing."

"This Jap here's got the whole set," said the salesman. "Matter of fact, he's a little overhung, if you ask me. But we get a lot of calls for this model, particularly over in Westport."

"They're very advanced over

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

there." Bruce joined the salesman beside the display. "What I want to do today is price some of the new gigolos. I don't actually want to buy one yet. I'm hoping against hope Cesar will wander back home to us."

The salesman asked, "You've put ads in all the media?"

"Oh, sure. Offered a reward and everything. I've just come from doing that." This way, with sad-sounding little advertisements and this pricing visit, Eva should get the idea he really wanted her to have an android gigolo around.

"I lost a beagle once when I was a kid," said the salesman. "My dad put ads in the paper, even flew over all of Brimstone in the family hopper. We never saw the darned dog again."

Bruce grinned sadly. With any luck he'd be able to say the same thing about Cesar.

The Android Warden was hovering over Bruce's lawn area when he drove his electric off the roadway and toward the garage. "Afternoon, Mr. Tatman," called Bruce as he gave the car over to the robot garage dome. "Any news for us?"

Tatman was a lean black man of fifty, dressed in a tan overall suit. "Which button is down in these mothers? Blue or green?" He was ten feet above the ground, rocking gently in a hover-basket.

"The blue button is for down."

"Blue. That's the little mother I been jabbing." Tatman grunted, pushing at something down inside the hanging bucket. "Never mind, I'll talk to you from up here. Can you hear me okay?"

"Perfectly. Have you located our lost android?"

"I thought I had him."

Looking up into the hazy late afternoon sky, Bruce kept himself grinning. "And do you?"

"Turned out to be a burger chef android on the loose. Once I got down close enough to see the spatula in his hand, I knew it wasn't your boy Cesar," said the Android Warden. "This mother was running amuck down the Merrit Slotway. I tell you, Mr. Tumey, androids are a long way from perfected."

"Everything is," said Bruce.

"Today alone I rounded up fifteen of the mothers that had wandered off."

"You're scamming me?"

"No, no scam. Fifteen mothering androids here and. . ." Tatman's hover-basket decided to rise, and it lifted him up out of hearing range, carrying him away toward the Long Island Sound.

"Are you finished screaming our most intimate secrets?"

Bruce grinned at the open front door of his multi-domed house. "Hi, Eva."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Come inside, Bruce." His wife was a slender sharp-edged brunette of twenty-eight.

When Bruce dropped his sample case on the hall ramp, it talked for a moment. "A paltry pack of polydactyl pussyfooters purveying pap," said a dozen small voices.

"What are they talking about now?" asked Eva.

"We're trying to sell them to the Spiro T. Agnew Memorial Park in Des Moines, Iowa."

"Who was he?"

"I'm not sure, but they've carved his head on the side of a mountain out there," said Bruce. "No news of poor Cesar, huh? I'm sorry."

Eva was still looking at the case. "You've got your nearly new sample case all scuffed up already."

"That's from yesterday in Bengasi, Libya," explained Bruce as he attempted to hug Eva. "There was some kind of revolt."

"I don't want to be hugged," his pretty wife told him. "I'm too unsettled. Where is Cesar?"

Bruce shrugged. "I don't know. I told you on the pixphone this afternoon. When the house got me ready for work this morning, Cesar was sitting in his favorite sitting pit in the living room dome watching a chess lecture on the cassette wall. He certainly seemed his usual affable self."

"You dragged him off and ditched him someplace," accused Eva. She turned away, walking up the ramp leading to the living room dome. "Just like the other times."

"What other times?" asked Bruce, following.

"The other times poor Cesar disappeared."

"Wandered off," corrected Bruce, avoiding a sitting pit in the floor. "Androids do that a lot, you know. I talked to the guy at Sexur, Inc., this afternoon, and he agrees."

"Why were you there?"

"Well, to price a new gigolo. In case. . ."

"Cesar better come home. He'd just damn well better."

"You can't count on it, Eva, even with a highly sophisticated mechanism like Cesar. Tatman was telling me. . ."

"I heard, I heard," cut in Eva. She sat on the rim of a pit. "Cesar doesn't wander off at all. You ditch him."

"You're upset. When you're upset, it makes you paranoid." He'd ditched Cesar all the way over in Muzaffarpur this morning to make sure he wouldn't come back. The times he'd left the android in Corpus Christi, Texas, and Jacksonville, Florida, Cesar had somehow managed to get himself turned on and back home. He wasn't likely to do that this time.

"You're extremely jealous of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

my android," said Eva, swinging her slim legs slowly to and fro. "As if I didn't love you first and foremost."

Bruce had always turned the android completely off, using the little switch under his arm, before sneaking him off to a teleport station. The android couldn't know how he got to Corpus Christi or Jacksonville. Still Eva seemed to have a pretty fair idea. "I know you love me," yelled Bruce. "As I love you. And I'm not jealous of some piece of gadgetry. I'm in tune with the times, I live in the 90s. Wives should have surrogate husbands to look after them while their real husbands are away. I'm not scamming you when I say I sincerely admire Cesar. I'm truly sorry he's wandered off again."

"Horse puckey," said Eva.

"I'm glad I agreed to let you keep that gift android in the first place. He's certainly made our marriage much calmer."

"You're the one who insisted we sign the zero population pledge," reminded his wife. "And take the pills."

"Now you want children *and* an andy."

"And an andy," mimicked Eva.

"Pets, pets," called a smooth deep voice. "There's nothing to be bitter about now. I'm home with my pets."

Bruce's left eyebrow lifted a quarter of an inch. He turned and saw Cesar walking up the ramp toward them.

"Cesar, what happened?" Eva jumped up, running to the tattered android.

Cesar was tall and blond and tan. His tartan jumpsuit was shredded, and there were smudges on his face and hands. "Some wild dogs attacked me."

But not nearly enough. "Cesar, old buddy," grinned Bruce. "Where did you wander to this time?"

Touching at the curls above his ears, Cesar replied, "It's an odd thing, Bruce. I must have stumbled into a teleport booth while dazed and somehow got the thing to operate without a credit card. I woke up in India."

Eva hugged the android. "Poor Cesar, you might have gotten involved in a famine or something."

"How'd you get back?" asked Bruce.

"I was extremely lucky," said Cesar. "I obtained help from the American embassy in town. My timing was excellent. I got there only moments before the locals put the torch to the place."

"Quit scamming," said Bruce. "There's no American embassy in Ma. . ."

"What?" asked Eva, frowning.

"Nothing," said Bruce. "I'm so elated at Cesar's return I don't know what I'm saying."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'll help you to your storeroom, Cesar, and put a new suit on you," said Eva.

"No need, pet," said the android, patting her hand. "I can do it. I'll freshen up and then turn myself off. When you want me again, just flick my switch."

"You can go along and clean him up, Eva," said Bruce with a grin. "I don't mind."

"If you're sure," said the handsome android. "It's not my job to be a fifth wheel after all."

Eva took his arm, leading him up the storeroom ramp. "Poor battered andy."

Bruce grinned again, dropped down into a sitting pit. Instead of sitting, he paced.

A week later. Bruce sat up in his sleeping pit at 3 AM. He'd been in Sosnowiec, Poland, and Yawata, Japan, that afternoon, and both trips he'd taken the wrong samples along. He'd popped into the Sosnowiec Zoo with tok-discs programmed to give a guided tour of the Yawata Cowboy Museum and arrived in Japan with tok-discs that did nothing but yodel. The mistakes meant four extra teleport trips. The notion that teleporting had no side effects was a scam. Those extra hops made him irritable, prickly feeling and wakeful. Bruce put his sleep-shoed feet over the edge of his hydrobed, yawned. Yawning he could do, but not sleeping. He reached out and unpronged the night mike. He might as well call over to Eva's sleeping pit and talk to her. Depending on her mood, it might be soothing.

Even after several beeps there was no answer. Adjusting his thermal sleepsuit, Bruce climbed up the sleeping pit ladder. He made his way across the faintly illuminated sleeping area flooring to peer down into Eva's pit. She wasn't there.

"What a scam," Bruce said to himself. "She was supposed to be dead tired."

After standing on the edge of the pit for a moment, rocking slowly to and fro, Bruce moved cautiously toward the exit arch. From somewhere else in the house a sound had come.

"That was the unmistakable sound of a plastic cork popping." Bruce moved up a ramp silently.

Nearing the storage room, he heard laughter, subdued laughter, and the sound of glasses clinking.

"To you, pet," murmured Cesar in his softly lit storeroom.

"So she scammed me about that, too," said Bruce to himself. "She told me the allergy computer at the Mandell Institute in Norwalk found she had an allergy to wines and spirits. She wouldn't even touch that case of soy champagne I brought back from Enugu, Nigeria, last week."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The laughter and glass clinking continued for quite a while. Bruce stood, still and silent, on the ramp listening. "She's only supposed to use him as a surrogate, when I'm not around. Now she's sneaking down here and flicking Cesar on at all hours of the day and night."

The laughter and tinkling subsided finally, replaced by a breathless thrashing. Bruce took one long deep breath and stalked back to the sleeping dome. He jumped down into his pit, ignoring the ladder. "Okay," he said, getting his twisted ankle up from under himself. "Let her go on thinking she's got me scammed. I'll keep quiet. There's no use arguing, as the psych andy at work pointed out. No, the thing to do is get rid of Cesar for good and all. With him gone things will return to normal."

He stretched out on the hydrobed. "If she absolutely insists on a new gigolo, I'll buy her one of those guys who does nothing but play the accordion."

He was going to do it close to home. That way Eva couldn't accuse him of teleporting Cesar off someplace. Oddly enough, though the Norman Rockwell Tower was almost in his backyard, Bruce heard about it first in California North. He'd been out there to demonstrate tok-discs to a patriotic builder who was erecting a memorial to the redwood trees. Bruce brought the right samples this time, but a side trip to Plovdiv, Bulgaria, had done something to the discs, and they would do nothing but sing *America the Beautiful* backwards.

The developer, a jovial Chinese who dressed as Benjamin Franklin, ordered two hundred tok-discs anyway. "They'll go perfect with my tribute to the once-mighty California redwood forest," he explained, while signing the order forms. "I got ahold of the last five hundred redwoods left out here, and I'm building this big enormous tower to commemorate the despoiling of one of our great national resources. It'll be even bigger than my Norman Rockwell Tower in Westport, Connecticut."

"You've got a tower in Westport, too."

"Not quite as monumental as this redwood thing. I got it on the site of what used to be the Famous Artists School."

"I hadn't noticed it."

"We just put it up yesterday. It was assembled in Kandahar, Afghanistan, where labor is cheaper. A real beauty, with reproductions of famous Rockwell art all up and down its outside. Boy scouts, kindly druggists, sweet old grannies, cocker spaniels, shy adolescents rising to the sky."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"How high?"

"A good three hundred feet. From the observation platform at the top you can see all of what's left of the once-majestic Saugatuck River."

"I'll have to get up there."

"Wait a few days," cautioned the patriotic Chinese. "They haven't installed a protective noryl see-through guard wall yet. You could maybe fall."

It was the next night, while silently crouched on the ramp leading down to Cesar's storage room and listening to the android and his wife, that Bruce decided to utilize the Rockwell Tower.

At 4 AM when Eva returned to their sleeping dome, Bruce was down in his pit pretending to toss and turn. "Norrkoping, Sweden," he murmured, scamming, pretending to be dreaming about his first tok-disc call of the morning.

As soon as he was certain Eva was asleep, Bruce, already dressed in a grey jumper suit, climbed out of his pit. She couldn't fool him about sleeping any more. He could tell real sleeping respiration from false now.

He went to the storeroom and to Cesar's pallet. He reached into the stretched-out android's clothes and located the underarm switch, making sure it was in the off position. It was. Cesar remained still and unmoving, but exhibiting that faint flutter of breathing which was characteristic of this model android.

Bruce located the coil of vinyl rope he'd slipped into the storeroom the night before. He wound it carefully around the prone android. "You won't walk back from this," he said, trussing up all Cesar's limbs.

They reached the tower at 5 AM, with Cesar under an orlon quilt in the back seat of the landcar. The tok-discs in his sample case were singing Swedish madrigals. The night was on the edge of turning thin, fog still hung heavy around the construction site. There were no people, no cruising police hoppers.

Bruce parked in a cluster of pseudo-trees near the tower and pulled the tied-up android out into the chill morning. Even in the fog Bruce could see the smiling pink-faced young girls and gnarly handed farmers and bent and lovable old grandmothers decorating the high noryl-walled tower. The observation platform looked like a cap—no, like a plastic champagne cork up there three hundred feet.

As far as he knew, it was only a misdemeanor to damage an android, but he was going to be careful anyway. He was even wearing a pair of blue kitchen gloves. Once he'd dropped Cesar, he'd drive to the nearest teleport station and jaunt to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sweden and then to Battambang, Cambodia, and then back to Stamford for lunch. By then Eva would have heard about Cesar's accident probably. The android had wandered off again, noticed the tower and climbed up to look around. A slip on the uncompleated platform, a slip on the dew-damp plastic flooring, and off into air. It sounded plausible.

Bruce tossed the quilt back into the car, slammed the door quietly on the chanting tok-discs. He carried the heavy android over his shoulder, to avoid leaving drag marks.

As he lugged the android up the corkscrewing stairway inside the tower, he said aloud, "It'll certainly look like an accident. Sure, Tatman's told me strayed andies get into all sorts of trouble. It's plausible. And after a fall like this Cesar will be unrepairable."

"Wait now, Bruce." Cesar began to struggle.

Bruce blinked, lowered the android onto a step. "How'd you turn yourself on?"

"Let's go back down to the ground, and we'll talk this situation over, Bruce. This is a bit different than being abandoned somewhere."

Bruce reached one hand through the ropes and into the android's armpit. "The damn switch is still off." He climbed around Cesar and began tugging him up the remaining fifty steps to the platform.

"There's an interesting story behind all this, Bruce. We'd better talk about it."

"No more talk, nope," said Bruce, short of breath. "This time I'm going to make sure you don't come back."

"Well, listen," said the tied Cesar as Bruce dragged him onto the wide misty platform. "The reason I'm so good at coming back. Bruce, is. . .well, it's because I'm not an android."

Bruce stopped when Cesar was four feet from the unprotected edge. "Huh?"

"Well, I hope you won't feel foolish," said Cesar, trying to roll himself away from the drop. "I suppose we should have confided in you sooner, but you know how these things are. One little deception leads to another."

"If you're not an android," asked Bruce, squatting, "who are you?"

"I'm a part-time macrame lecturer," explained Cesar. "I met Eva two years ago at a lecture of mine over in West Redding."

"Eva used to go to a lot of lectures."

"Well, one thing led to another, and soon we were trying to work out a way to see each other more often," said

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Cesar. "It was Eva—she's much more imaginative than you give her credit for—it was she who came up with the android gigolo notion. She'd been after you to buy one, and you were about convinced. So I went out and had this switch implanted. We only expected it to work for a few weeks, but you know how these things are."

Bruce frowned, then stood back and grinned. "Oh, a nice try, Cesar, old buddy," he said. "You know how gullible I am, and you're making one last attempt to scam me. You can't make me believe I spent two years around you and never tumbled. No, I'm not that gullible." He bent suddenly and rolled Cesar over the edge.

After the landing he'd retrieve the ropes and drive away.

Cesar screamed on the way down, and he landed with a very odd sound.

Bruce hesitated, walked carefully to the edge of the platform. He looked down at what was left of Cesar. "Son of a bitch," he said. "Scammed again."

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS ON THE MOVE

Will you put yourself in the place of a copy of F&SF for a moment? A copy that is mailed to your home, only to find that you have moved. Is it forwarded to you? *No.* Is it returned to us? *No.* Instead, a post office regulation decrees that it must be. . .thrown away! We are notified of this grim procedure and charged ten cents for each notification. Multiply this aimless ending by hundreds each month and we have a doubly sad story: copies that do nobody any good, and a considerable waste of money to us, money which we would much prefer to spend on new stories. With your help, this situation can be changed. *If you are planning a change of address, please notify us six weeks in advance. If possible, enclose a label from a recent issue, and be sure to give us both your old and new address, including the zip codes.*

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE, MERCURY PRESS, Inc., P. O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Some time ago, Mr. Fritch sent us a deal with the devil story which we returned with a polite note saying that we rather enjoyed it but didn't really want to use *another* deal with the devil story, not now, maybe not ever. Mr. Fritch responded with the piece below, and having cleverly backed us into a corner, there was nothing to do but admit that it was darned good fun. So. . .

If At First You Don't Succeed, To Hell With It!

by CHARLES E. FRITCH

Editor,
MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
Dear Sir,
Enclosed is a short story, PACT WITH THE DEVIL, for your consideration. A fact which may not surprise you is that it concerns a man who sells his soul to the devil. A fact which *may* surprise you is that, unlike the stories in your magazine, this one is based on personal experience.

Sincerely,
Peter Piper

MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
INTEROFFICE MEMO:
Ed—
Here's one via the slush pile. Writing's not bad, but the theme may be too familiar.

Frank

MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
INTEROFFICE MEMO:
Frank—
I don't intend running another pact-with-the-devil story for at least ninety-nine years.

Ed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From MAGAZINE OF FANTASY:
Dear Mr. Piper,
Thanks for letting us see your short story, PACT WITH THE DEVIL. Unfortunately, this theme is overworked and would have to be far different in its approach to have us seriously consider it.

The Editors

Editor,
MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
Dear Sir,
I have revised my previously submitted story according to your instructions. Enclosed is PACT WITH A DEVIL'S FOOD BAKERY.

Sincerely,
Peter Piper

MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
INTEROFFICE MEMO:
Ed—
This is a kind of interesting twist on the old theme. Thought you'd like to look at it.

Frank

MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
INTEROFFICE MEMO:
Frank—
You thought wrong. The notion that devil's food is actually made by devils in competition with angels who bake angel food cake hasn't to my knowledge been used. However, it's *still* a pact-with-the-devil story. You KNOW how I feel about pact-with-the-devil stories!

Ed

From MAGAZINE OF FANTASY:
Dear Mr. Piper,
Thanks for letting us see your latest story. Unfortunately, it does not meet our needs at the moment.

The Editors

Editor,
MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
Dear Sir,
Enclosed is a short story in which a packing plant worker inadvertently gets trapped in a seafood container. I call it PACKED WITH THE DEVIL-FISH.

Sincerely,
Peter Piper

MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
INTEROFFICE MEMO:
Ed—
Here's another Piper story. Do you think he's putting us on?

Frank

MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
INTEROFFICE MEMO:
Frank—
I am not, *not*, NOT publishing any more pact-with-the-devil stories, not even if they're disguised. Send it back!

Ed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

From MAGAZINE OF FANTASY:
Dear Mr. Piper,
Thanks for letting us see the enclosed story. We felt this one was too far out for us.

The Editors

Editor,
MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
Dear Sir,
Here's one you might like. It's entitled SO ROUND, SO FIRM, SO FULLY PACKED (WITH THE DEVIL).

Sincerely,
Peter Piper

MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
INTEROFFICE MEMO:
Ed—
Persistent, isn't he? What'll I tell him on this one?

Frank

MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
INTEROFFICE MEMO:
Frank—
You might try telling him to go to hell.

Ed

From MAGAZINE OF FANTASY:
Dear Mr. Piper,
Sorry we can't use the enclosed story. The writing is readable, but once again the problem is the theme. Is there some reason you *insist* on writing pact-with-the-devil stories?

The Editors

Editor,
MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
Dear Sir,
Funny you should ask. The answer is yes. I have tried to explain it in the enclosed short story, PETER PIPER WAS PICKED IN THE PARK FOR A PACT WITH THE DEVIL. As you may suspect, it is autobiographical.

Sincerely,
Peter Piper

MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
INTEROFFICE MEMO:
Ed—
I wasn't even going to show you this one. But then I got to thinking. I know it's crazy, and he's probably some kind of a nut. . .but suppose the devil is actually forcing him to write pact-with-the-devil stories and he has to have one published within a time limit or his soul is snatched off to Hades?

Frank

MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
INTEROFFICE MEMO:
Frank—
I never told you this before, but I have a pact with the devil myself—not to buy any more pact-with-the-devil stories!
You're the last person I expected to be taken in by a ruse like this. Under the circumstances, my previous suggestion to you seems more valid than ever. Tell him to go

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to hell.

Ed

From MAGAZINE OF FANTASY:
Dear Mr. Piper,
I've enclosed an interoffice memo spelling out our senior editor's feelings about the theme you seem to have chosen for your life's work. Sorry.

The Editors

Editor,
MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
Dear Sir,
Your suggestion that I go to Hell is superfluous. My time is up, and I haven't sold any of the stories. I imagine I'll be seeing you there in person one of these days.

Till then,
Peter Piper

MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
INTEROFFICE MEMO:
Ed—
No story this time. Just the enclosed letter. I have an uncanny feeling we won't be hearing from him again.

Frank

MAGAZINE OF FANTASY
INTEROFFICE MEMO:
Frank—
I hope you're right about that. Would you believe I was beginning to have nightmares about pact-with-the-devil stories? There was PARKED WITH THE DEVIL—about this cab driver whose passenger has horns and a forked tail. Then there was PARCHED WITH THE DEVIL, about two thirsty men who meet in a bar, and one of them is guess who? And PUCK WITH THE DEVIL, in which a hockey player doesn't go to Hades until Hell freezes over. And so forth.
Anyway, I feel much relieved. Maybe we should tell more writers where to go!

Ed

To Lucifer Satan
EARTH STORIES MAGAZINE
Hades
Dear Sir,
Enclosed is a story which might be of interest to you for your magazine.

Sincerely,
Peter Piper

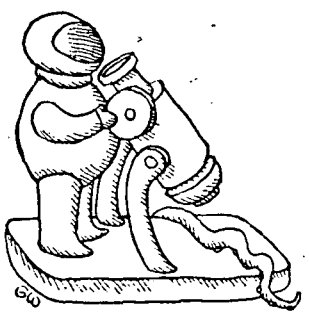
From EARTH STORIES MAGAZINE:
Dear Mr. Piper,
While we encourage the submission of stories from our newer tenants, we cannot use the enclosed. We have decided that unless they are sufficiently different, we are not going to run any more pact-with-the-editor stories.

Lucifer Satan

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ISAAC ASIMOV

SCIENCE



DOCTOR, DOCTOR, CUT MY THROAT

TWO MONTHS AGO, I WAS persuaded to visit a doctor for a routine medical examination. This was something I resisted because I generally enjoy perfect health, and I don't want any doctor telling me anything different. Eventually, though, pouting and sulking, I let myself be examined.

The doctor said, "You are in perfect health, Isaac."

"I told you so," I said, heatedly, "before you started."

"Except," he said, "for a thyroid tumor."

Sure enough, there was a clear bulge in the smooth and youthful lines of my throat when I bent it backward. The lump was easily felt, too. Since I had never seen or felt it before, I naturally accused my doctor of putting it there. He smiled indulgently and asked me how I expected him to make a living otherwise.

Let us not go into what took place over the next month or so. Completely overlooking my protests, and my sudden interest in the possibility of faith-healing, my doctor callously laid his insidious plans for surgery, and on February 12, 1972, I found myself inducted into a hospital room. I watched, with increas-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing apprehension, as preparations were made for an operation on my throat on the morning of the 15th.

Carefully, my surgeon (a cheerful rascal with sparkling eyes and a light-hearted chuckle) described the incision he would make from ear to ear, and the slow four-hour inspection he expected to make of every item in my throat.

I brooded quite a bit, you can imagine.

The night before, they forced me to take a sleeping pill (the first one I had ever taken), and the next morning they came in and jabbed me thrice with, I presume, three different tranquilizers and/or sedatives. This was designed (it was explained to me) to keep me from climbing the walls as they tried to wheel me down to the carving room.

Alas, they did not count on my peculiar emotional makeup. Inside me there are only two emotions, anxiety and hilarity. When anything is done to remove the anxiety, whether that be a piece of good news, some convivial company, or half a finger of light wine—I get hilarious.

So now, very early on the morning of the 15th, when I was given an injection of the first tranquilizers I had ever taken, away went my worries, and I was left feeling hilarious.

They put me on the meat-cart and, as they wheeled me down the corridors, I waved my arms and sang at the top of my resonant voice. I kept it up all the way to the torture chamber. I distinctly heard one nurse saying to another, "Did you ever come across *this* reaction to medication before?"

They got me to the chopping-block at last, tipped the cart and rolled me down under that big light. And there came my surgeon, with his green mask on, and with his eyes sparkling jovially.

As soon as I saw him, I reached up, grabbed him, and intoned:

"Doctor, doctor, with green coat,
Doctor, doctor, cut my throat.
And when you've cut it, doctor, then,
Won't you sew it up again?"

By that time they had managed to jab me with the anesthesia, and I lost touch with everything. But, my surgeon told me afterward, he stood there laughing, and wondering if he could get his hand steady enough to make that first incision.*

Well, the operation is over; half my thyroid is gone; and I'm

** I've often said that I'd do anything for a laugh, but having a surgeon with his scalpel at my throat and setting his hand to shaking with laughter goes, I think, about five miles beyond the bounds of reason.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

recovering. So let's get *something* out of it. Let me tell you about hormones.

It took a while for mankind to appreciate his nervous system. There are about 100,000 miles of nerve fibers in the adult human body, and these focus upon the brain and spinal cord, which consist of three pounds of the most complex organization of matter known to man. Yet Aristotle could think of no function for the brain other than to serve as a cooling organ for the blood that passed through it.

In 1766, the Swiss physiologist, Albrecht von Haller, published his researches; these showing that the stimulation of a nerve leading to a muscle was more effective in producting a muscle contraction than direct stimulation of the muscle would be. He also showed that all nerves led eventually to the brain or spinal cord. He was the founder of neurology, and throughout the 19th Century, physiologists were increasingly interested in working out the intricacies of the nervous system.

For instance, when you eat, the gastric juices of your stomach start to flow while the food is still in your mouth. The glands in the stomach lining know that food is on the way before anything reaches them.

Presumably, this advance "knowledge" on the part of the stomach glands comes through nerve action. The food in the mouth stimulates certain nerves which carry the message to the brain, which, in turn, sends out a new message along nerves leading to the stomach lining, saying, "Secrete!"

A "presumable" solution, however, cuts no ice in science, as long as the phenomenon can be tested by experiment. In 1889, the Russian physiologist, Ivan Petrovich Pavlov, therefore set about testing the presumable.

He severed a dog's gullet and led the upper end through an opening in the neck. The dog could then be fed, but the food would drop out through the open gullet and never reach the stomach.* Nevertheless, the gastric secretion flowed at the proper moment. Pavlov then cut appropriate nerves to the stomach, or from the mouth and throat, and though the dog then ate as heartily as before, the gastric juices did not flow.

** I recognize the necessity of animal experiments with my mind, but not with my heart. When I was doing active, full-time work at a medical school, I did no animal experiments myself, and I always walked out when animals were brought in by anyone else. —Yet there are many times when there is simply no substitute for work on an intact organism.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For these and other researches into the physiology of digestion, and for establishing the importance of the autonomic nervous system, Pavlov received the Nobel Prize for medicine and physiology in 1904.

The nature of the nerve connection between mouth and stomach raised the question of the nature of the nerve connection between stomach and small intestine—the next step along the pathway of the alimentary canal.

When food leaves the stomach and enters the small intestine, a large digestive gland called the pancreas is suddenly galvanized into activity and pours its digestive secretion into the duodenum, the first section of the small intestine. The result is that the stomach contents, as they are squirted into the duodenum, are promptly bathed by a digestive secretion that is well designed to continue the process of digestion from the point where the stomach's work left off.

Here is an example of excellent organization. If the pancreas secreted its juices continuously, that would represent a great waste, for most of the time they would be expended to no purpose. On the other hand, if the pancreas secreted its juices intermittently (as it does), but did so at either regular or random intervals, the secretions would not be likely to synchronize with food entry into the duodenum, and not only would the secretions then be wasted, but food would remain imperfectly digested.

The fact that food entry and pancreas secretion *are* perfectly synchronized seems to indicate the presence of nerve action. If there were any doubt, Pavlov's experiments on mouth and stomach would surely prove it, by analogy.

However, proofs by analogy are shaky. Direct testing is much preferred. In 1902, then, two English physiologists, William Maddock Bayliss and Ernest Henry Starling, decided to spend some time on the unrewarding task of taking Pavlov's findings one short step further. (You get the Nobel Prize for the first step, a footnote in the history books for the second.)

Bayliss and Starling cut the nerves to the pancreas of a laboratory animal and, presumably, fell off their respective chairs when the pancreas kept on working in perfect synchronization even though it lacked the nerves that would bring it messages.

How could that be?

The stomach contents are unique in the body in that they are strongly acid. The gastric juice contains not only the enzyme,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pepsin, which digests protein, but also a surprising quantity of hydrochloric acid, which keeps the gastric juices at the strong acidity required for the most efficient working of the pepsin, and which does a little protein digestion on its own.* The discovery of this production of hydrochloric acid (a strong mineral acid which would, on the face of it, seem incompatible with life) came in 1824, and was a profound shock to biologists.

The quick discharge of pancreatic juice not only carries on digestive breakdown of the food in the stomach contents but helps to neutralize the acidity, for the pancreatic juice is mildly alkaline. (Failure to take care of the acidity properly is surely a contributing factor to duodenal ulcers.)

With all this in mind, Bayliss and Starling set about trying to find the factor that produced pancreatic synchronization. If it was not a question of nerve action, was it something in the stomach contents itself? If it was, what could it be but that distinctive characteristic, the acidity of those contents. To begin with, why not separate the acidity from all the rest, and test it alone?

They therefore introduced a small quantity of hydrochloric acid into the small intestine at a time when the animal was fasting and its stomach was empty. Promptly, the pancreas, without nerve attachments, did its job with great vigor, and the empty duodenum was a-slosh with pancreatic juice.

If, then, it was the acidification of the duodenal lining that triggered the pancreas, Bayliss and Starling decided to carry things one step further. They obtained a section of the duodenum from a newly killed animal and soaked it in hydrochloric acid. Something in that duodenum was now converted (perhaps) into the triggering factor (whatever it was).

If the message were not carried by nerves, it might well be carried by the blood, which was the one moving tissue of the body and which connected every organ in the body with every other—specifically, the duodenum with the pancreas.

In that case, suppose a small quantity of the acid in which the duodenal lining had been soaked, was injected into the bloodstream of a living animal. If the acid now had the triggering factor in it, then—what would happen?

A fasting animal was chosen, one with nothing in the duodenum,

* *It is a perennial puzzle that digestive enzymes don't digest the linings of the alimentary canal. For that matter, how is it that hydrochloric acid doesn't wreak havoc on the stomach lining? Whatever the protective device is, it isn't perfect, and when it fails, a gastric ulcer can result.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

neither gastric content nor artificially inserted hydrochloric acid. Nevertheless, because of the injection of whatever-it-was into the bloodstream, the pancreas sprang into action.

The conclusion seemed unavoidable. The intestinal lining reacted to acidity by producing a chemical which was secreted into the bloodstream. The bloodstream carried the chemical throughout the body to every organ, including the pancreas. When the chemical reached the pancreas, it somehow stimulated that organ into secreting its juice.

Bayliss and Starling named the substance produced by the intestinal lining "secretin" for obvious reasons. Assuming that there might be other examples of such substances in the body, Bayliss, in the course of a lecture in 1905, suggested a general name. He called these chemical messengers "hormones," from a Greek word meaning "I arouse" since hormones roused some dormant organ or organs to activity.

Bayliss and Starling never got a Nobel Prize for their discovery of hormones, though, in my opinion, their work was of more fundamental importance than that of Pavlov. Perhaps Pavlov thought this, too, for after the discovery of hormones, he left the field of orthodox digestive physiology and began to study the various ways in which salivation in dogs could be stimulated. In doing so, he worked out the details of the conditioned response in the 1920s, and for this he more clearly deserves the Nobel Prize than for the research for which he actually received it.

Although hormones were discovered after nerve-action, it is the hormone which is the older and the more basic messenger. Very simple animals and all plants lack a nervous system and yet manage to get along on the basis of chemical messages alone.

In fact, we might suppose that nerves developed in the more complex animals because the necessity of swift muscular motion (plants and very simple animals have no muscles either) placed a premium upon swift sensations and swift reactions.

The shift from hormones to nerves is somehow analogous (it seems to me) to the shift from mechanical interaction to electronic interaction in man's technology. Control through electron flow is much quicker and more delicate than control through intermeshing gears. The brain would, by this analogy, resemble the central control room, where distant objects are adjusted delicately by observing the reading of pivoting needles and flashing lights and then closing appropriate contacts.

In fact, one would ask why hormones continued to function in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

organisms in which the nerve network and the brain were highly developed? Why do we bother with the horse-and-buggy system of carrying chemicals by the blood-stream to every part of the body in the hope that some one part will make use of it; when we have available the jet-plane system of nerves carrying their messages quickly and *specifically* to the place where it is needed?

One answer is that evolution is a conservative process, one that tends to hold on to everything possible, modifying and adjusting it, rather than abandoning it.

Then, too, hormones have their advantages. For one thing, they can control portions of the physiology without bothering the nervous system, which is loaded down as it is, and would welcome any respite. For another, hormones manage to keep a permanent adjustment of some factors in a simple and automatic way that requires little investment of effort on the part of the body generally.

For instance, secretin is produced by the action of acidity on the duodenal lining. The secretin, once produced, stimulates the pancreas into discharging pancreatic juice into the duodenum. The mildly alkaline pancreatic juice quickly diminishes the acidity of the stomach contents that have entered the duodenum. —And the decline of acidity cuts down the production of secretin which, in turn, cuts down pancreatic activity.

In short, the formation of the secretin stimulates an action which brings about a halt in the formation of secretin. It is a "self-limiting" process. There is "feedback." The result is that the flow of pancreatic juice is not merely initiated by hormone activity, but the rate of that flow is carefully adjusted from moment to moment by hormone activity and by the feedback it produces.

As the twentieth century wore on, other hormones were discovered, and some of them were produced by small organs that had that production as their only function. One of these—and the one that has a morbid interest for me right now—is a yellowish-red mass of glandular tissue about two inches high, a bit more than two inches wide, and weighing an ounce or a little less. It exists in two lobes, one on either side of the windpipe, with a narrow connecting band running in front of the windpipe just on the bottom boundary of the Adam's apple.

The Adam's apple is more properly called the "thyroid cartilage" from a Greek word meaning "shieldlike." This is in reference to the large, oblong shields carried by Homeric and pre-Homeric warriors. These had a notch on top where the head might cautiously emerge to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

survey the situation. There is just such a notch on top of the Adam's apple, hence the name.

The glandular tissue in the neighborhood of the Adam's apple borrows that name and is called the "thyroid gland."

Before the end of the 19th Century, the function of the thyroid gland was not known. It was somewhat more prominent in women than in men, and one opinion maintained that the thyroid was nothing more than padding designed to fill out the neck (of women, particularly) and make it plumply attractive. There were regions in Europe where the thyroid (again, particularly in women) was enlarged beyond the normal size, and this, which meant a somewhat swollen neck, was accepted as an enhancement of beauty.

This enlargement, called a goiter (from a Latin word for "throat") was sometimes associated with one of two opposing sets of symptoms. Some goiterous individuals were dull, listless and apathetic; while others were nervous, tense, and unstable. (Through hindsight, we know that the thyroid controls the metabolic rate of the body, the general speed of the body's motor, so to speak. An enlarged thyroid, all parts of which are functioning, races the motor; while an enlarged thyroid, where few parts are functioning, throttles it down to a murmur.)

In 1896, a German chemist, Eugen Baumann, located iodine in the thyroid gland. This was surprising, for iodine had not been known to be a component of living tissue before. What's more, no other element was ever found to be so lopsidedly present in an organism, either before or since. The concentration of iodine in the thyroid is 60,000 times as great as in the rest of the body.

In 1905, an American physicist, David Marine, just out of medical school, brooded over this fact. Iodine was not a common element and was obtained chiefly from sea-organisms which concentrated it out of its very dilute presence in ocean water. Salt-spray from the ocean might scatter thin quantities of iodine over the land, but there were places on land where the iodine content of the soil was very low, and, behold, those were the places where goiter was particularly common.

Perhaps the absence of iodine resulted in less-than-normal functioning of the thyroid, which tried to correct the situation (uselessly) by enlarging itself. Marine experimented on animals, depriving them of iodine and producing both goiter and the dull listlessness characteristic (we now know) of an under-functioning thyroid. He cured the condition by adding small quantities of iodine to their food.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By 1916, he felt confident enough to experiment on girls and was able to show that traces of iodine in the food cut down the incidence of goiter in humans. He then launched a campaign to add small quantities of iodine compounds to the water supply of the city, a process which virtually eliminated goiter. The campaign, meeting the usual resistance from those who preferred goiter to change, took ten years.

In general, the thyroid hormone is produced in proportion to need. If the rate of metabolism needs to be high, thyroid hormone is consumed rapidly, and the blood level falls. This fall and the consequent less-than-normal level of the hormone in the blood stimulates heightened activity on the part of the thyroid and keeps the level normal despite the greater use. If the rate of metabolism needs to be low, thyroid hormone is but slowly consumed and the blood level rises. This, we might suppose, would inhibit thyroid activity and slow it down.

We might suppose that the high or low level of thyroid in the blood would affect the thyroid directly, but not so. Since the thyroid produces the hormone, the blood concentration in its own vicinity would always be higher than in the remainder of the body and would respond less rapidly to changes in metabolic rate. The thyroid, if it relied on itself and its immediate surroundings, would receive but a blurred and distorted picture of what was going on. (It would be something like an executive judging the worth of his ideas by the opinions of his yes-men.)

A better situation is to set a separate gland to work, one located in a different part of the body. In this case, it is the pituitary gland, situated at the base of the brain.

The pituitary produces a number of hormones, one of which is called the "thyroid-stimulating hormone," a phrase often abbreviated as "TSH."

TSH, though poured into the bloodstream generally, as all hormones are, affects only the thyroid. TSH stimulates it and causes it to increase its production of thyroid hormone. When the blood level of thyroid hormone falls too low, this stimulates the production of TSH by the pituitary, which is located far enough from the thyroid so that the blood passing through it accurately reflects the thyroid-hormone level in the body generally.

The increase of TSH stimulates the activity of the thyroid gland. The level of thyroid hormone in the blood then rises and this depresses pituitary activity. As TSH goes down, so does thyroid

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

activity, and as the thyroid hormone goes down, up goes TSH and therefore up goes thyroid activity.

The result of the thyroid and pituitary working together is that the thyroid hormone is kept at a markedly steady level in the blood stream despite the rise and fall of the body's need for the hormone at different times and under different conditions of activity.

Let's see, now, how all this affects me.

The fact that half my thyroid is gone is not, in itself, a terribly serious thing. The remaining half of my thyroid, forced to work twice as hard as usual by the unrelenting demands of my pituitary would hypertrophy (that is, grow larger) and easily produce all the thyroid hormone I would need.

This, however, is viewed without enthusiasm by my doctors. One half of my thyroid has already displayed undisciplined growth and has had to be taken out. Given that, the rest of my thyroid can't be trusted to know how to hypertrophy with discretion. It must be dealt with in a spirit of keen suspicion.

The result is that I am going to be taking thyroid pills for the rest of my life. The thyroid hormone is a modified amino acid that is not subject to digestion but is absorbed directly. This means that I don't have to inject the stuff as I would if it were insulin I needed. Instead, I just swallow it. In addition, thyroid pills are prepared from the thyroid glands of slaughtered livestock. There is no other use for those glands, so the pills are relatively cheap and readily available.

With a constant supply of thyroid hormone entering my body from the outside, my pituitary gland (unable to differentiate the thyroid hormone from a pill and the thyroid hormone from my very own thyroid gland) lowers its production of TSH and keeps it lowered.

With TSH chronically lowered, what is left of my thyroid gland remains understimulated and, far from growing, shrinks. As a result, the chance of my developing a tumor on the left to match the one I once had on my right is significantly decreased.

So there you are, and there I am, and I don't like it, but the universe doesn't care whether I like it or not, and I can only be thankful it was no worse. And now, barring further incidents of a distressing nature, it may well be that I will continue writing these essays for some time to come.

I hope.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

William Lee, who has proved a superior storyteller with such as "A Message From Charity," (November 1967) and "Sea Home," (June 1968), returns with a suspenseful tale about a Terran "protective action" and a puzzling extraterrestrial race who have been tagged "unicorns" and who are being used as pawns in the battle.

To Gild A Unicorn

by WILLIAM LEE

I SAT ON A PACKING CASE in the pale sunlight and waited for somebody to come along and take me to wherever I was supposed to go, or at least point the way. The ship had put down on Licorne, at Caillou Beach early this morning, early morning, that is, at Caillou; and as soon as I'd gotten my gear off, I was hustled into a copter to bring me to Base Five.

But I wasn't at the base yet. This was a landing field with a single, real short runway. Presumably all they had here was copters, V/STOLS and maybe small planes. Jungle of sorts grew right up to the edges of the strip and wasn't like anything I'd ever seen on Earth. The trees were tall with fine, fuzzy, yellow-green foliage, and between them grew ferns or some such, twice as tall as a man. They or the trees had a queer but not unpleasant odor. A cool breeze was blowing, and the sun didn't seem very hot, but it must have had plenty of ultraviolet. I put my hat back on.

After a while a power cycle with a double sidecar came up the narrow road and swung around beside me, and a red-headed soldier asked if I was Captain Kelvin. I said yes, only I wasn't a captain but a reporter wearing a uniform because that was the regulation. I loaded my bags in one side and got in the other. He said his name was Howie Flanders and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that I didn't need to say I wasn't a captain because I handled my own gear. He was pleased with his remark and kept grinning about it as we went weaving and bouncing along the dirt road.

"How far is it to Base Five?" I asked.

"A few miles. Four, maybe? They were going to put the base here first, but they decided to move it."

"Why?"

"Just to make it harder. So you're a reporter, huh?"

"That's right."

"You don't take your orders from Colonel Kimberle?"

"No, I'm responsible to my boss back home."

"Lucky bastard."

"You never worked for my boss. He's a subeditor with an ulcer, and he'd like to share it with me. What's the matter with Colonel Kimberle?"

"Nothing, I guess, except that officers are poison most of the time. You're a fake officer, so I can say that. How come you're out here now? The brass expecting something to break?"

"Not that I know of. There's one other war correspondent on Licorne. He works for AP. I'm with Interplanetary Press."

"Big outfit?"

"Not very."

We were rounding a curve in the road when Flanders jammed on the brake so hard that I almost took a nose dive out of the sidecar. Something was lying across the track half in the ditch and about twenty feet ahead of us.

"What is it?"

"Dead Unicorn. Wasn't here when I came by ten minutes ago. Booby-trapped for sure. Maybe a land mine or maybe there's a Droog waiting to pot-shot us when we move it."

He scowled and backed us up a few feet. I couldn't see much of the Unicorn, but he looked dead all right. Flanders looked right and left, but you couldn't see far into the jungle.

He took the heavy service automatic out of his holster, aimed rather awkwardly and shot at the body, apparently scoring a clean miss. The sound of the shot wasn't loud, but I kept thinking of somebody or something hiding there in the jungle, and I felt like a target.

"Let me try it." He surrendered the gun willingly. I'd never shot a service gun, but I assumed a kickback and allowed for it. The body jumped a little at the impact. There was time to see that before the trip wire, or whatever the mechanism was, blasted our eardrums. The dead Unicorn disappeared in flying rubble, leaving only a good-sized hole in the road. The cycle roared into motion. Flanders swerved off the road

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

just enough to keep from toppling us into the blast crater, and we hightailed it all the way to the base.

"First time I ever tried to shoot one of those things except on the range," he said apologetically.

"But your second shot was a good one," I told him.

He turned his head a fraction to glance at me. "Look, Captain, we're going to report it like it was."

"No, we're not. A reporter has to obey the rules. You look at what's going on, but if you try to take any part in it, you get booted out but fast."

He thought about that. "If that's the way you want it, OK. Gimme back the gun. We're here. Where do you want to go, your quarters, or up to see the colonel?"

"Where are my quarters?"

"Down that way, beyond the hospital. See the second green building? You'll be there with the doctor and a couple of nurses and the top medical aide. Pretty nice quarters."

"If you could drop my bags off, I'll see the colonel first," I decided. "So you've got nurses here. I'd have thought you were too far out in the boondocks."

"We are that, but five hundred men rate two nurses. Not bad. Maybe you can get to them. I can't. They're lieutenants."

Kimberle wasn't in his office when I got there, or wasn't admitting it, but it was close to lunch time, and I met him half an hour later in the officers' mess, along with a dozen other officers, including the doctor who was a lieutenant colonel. In the news business you get to expect a grudging minimum of help from the military, and so I wasn't disappointed. Plenty of cordiality and not much information. The colonel himself was all right, a nice guy and, I think, intelligent, but what he had to tell me after lunch wasn't so good. I was to be allowed a dispatch of a hundred words a day, or I could save them up and send seven hundred a week. Not much room for local color. My paragraphs would be reviewed by him, Kimberle, then go to Licorne Headquarters at Caillou to get another going over by General Clayton, or rather by his Deputy, Colonel Faust. They were, said Kimberle, a little fussy these days about what went out.

"You may find life least frustrating," he said with an air of sympathetic understanding, "if you'd just accept the handouts prepared by Army News Service and dress them up a bit. It's not that we want to muzzle the news, but you might inadvertently send out something that ought to be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

classified, that might be of advantage to the enemy."

"Why only a hundred words a day?" I asked.

"Obvious, I should think. Time on subspace radio costs—oh, God knows what—a few thousand dollars a second. Interplanetary doesn't pay for that. It's at government cost. We don't want to be stingy, but there it is."

I was taken to my quarters by the doctor, whose name was Dick Prater. The building contained maybe ten smallish bedrooms, two bathrooms and a comfortable lounge with a bar, kept locked except when in official use, which meant whenever somebody in good standing wanted a drink. I anted ten dollars and was given a key.

Dick suggested that I might want to get some shut-eye before fifteen hundred when I'd want to be around to see the Unicorns get their daily meal. First, though, he had a few minutes to fill me in before he had to go to the hospital. I said that would be fine, and how about telling me something about Unicorns.

Instead he asked a question. "Why did you come out here?" He had a long kindly face with deep wrinkles, and he looked permanently tired. He must have been born with a bedside manner. "Was it under orders?"

"No," I said, "I wanted to come. I plugged for the assignment. I've only had one other off-Earth assignment, and that was a quicky. When all the volcanoes on Garve blew their tops at once."

"I remember that. A mess, wasn't it. You didn't answer my question. Why here? There must be plenty of other off-Earth jobs to be done."

I wondered what to tell him. "Well, partly, this is getting to be a pretty unpopular war, back on earth, not that we know much about it. Nobody wants to see the Unicorns tyrannized and oppressed by the Droogs, but people are starting to ask whether it's really possible to insure freedom of self-government on eighteen planets, and how come it's our business anyway. In addition there've been some pretty crummy stories about what was going on out here. Just rumors and probably nothing to them, but I wanted to get here and see for myself and do some honest reporting."

He rearranged his wrinkles into something like a grin that wasn't amused. "Yeah. I'll talk to you about the Unicorns later, after you've seen them in action."

The shut-eye seemed like a good idea. I'd been on Licorne less than six hours and traveling in warp-drive beats the hell out

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of you. I set my watch to wake me at three.

When I got outside a few minutes later, there were Unicorns wandering into Base Five from all directions. Once arrived, they stood around waiting for something to happen. Terrans or most other intelligent species would have formed groups and talked or communicated some way or other, but these fellows all kept a little distance from one another. Pretty soon there must have been a thousand of them, mostly near the headquarters buildings.

Everybody knows from pictures what Unicorns look like, but pictures don't tell the whole story. They're ninety percent humanoid, but that other ten percent makes all the difference. They stand four and a half to five feet tall, not counting the horn, which sticks straight up from their heads and adds another foot. And they have vertical slit pupils like a goat. They seemed to me gentle and friendly, but the horn and the eyes provoke misgivings, so that you hesitate to turn you back on them. On the whole, though, they're appealing.

There was a sergeant standing nearby, and I asked him whether the Unicorns really depended on food from the base. He spat and said, "Christ, they like the stuff. Field combat rations. They got plenty to eat in the woods, fruit and stuff, but they like this muck."

A line of motorized carts appeared from one of the buildings and fanned out into a checkerboard pattern. The Unicorns arranged themselves in lines, and each got a package from one of the carts; then they all sat down on the ground cross-legged and began to eat as if famished. I watched the one closest to me. He finished his ration in three minutes flat, jumped up and returned the wrappings to the cart. Keep Licorne beautiful. In exchange he was handed a knife and a small pistol. He stuck them into loops, one on each side of his belt. The belts, which looked like army issue, served the primary purpose of holding up their kilts, which was all they wore except sandals. I couldn't be sure, of course, but all these Unicorns gave the impression of being young adults, in their prime. There were no females, but I saw a good many of them later, hornless and markedly mammalian.

"Now get a load of this," said the sergeant, "but be ready to duck out if they come this way. They're like crazy."

I never asked that sergeant's name, and the next time I saw him he was dead.

The Unicorns started to fight

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in pairs and in groups. They used horns and fists and the knives. The pistols, so far as I could see, stayed hung in their belts. They didn't come our way, but even from a distance it was a shocking, stomach-turning sight. A lot of blood was being spilled, and here and there I saw Unicorns writhing on the ground or lying still. I thought for a minute I was going to throw up.

"What the hell kind of war is this?" I asked. "Self-inflicted genocide?"

"Watch," he said.

I kept on watching, feeling revulsion at what I saw, but also a growing puzzlement. There was something unreal, almost stagy about the scene, as if the figures were marionettes on strings engaged in a macabre ballet. It was clear enough that the Unicorns were being hurt and some of them killed, but not nearly so many as I had thought at first. Fists were flying and knives flashing. With heads lowered, Unicorns charged at Unicorns with the apparent intent of impaling one another on their horns, but most of them escaped injury. Serious injury. I realized that the Terran soldiers who were circulating around the battlefield were separating pairs and groups of fighters. I saw too that a gradual movement was developing, that the Unicorns were moving, at first slowly then more rapidly, toward a point in the jungle wall where there was a break among the trees. In a matter of minutes they were all gone. A company or more of Terran soldiers followed them, moving at the double, and they in turn disappeared into the jungle. Only the wounded and dead were left.

Stretchermen ran out into the clearing and began to bring the wounded back to the hospital. With all the apparent carnage, there were only a few. A truck rumbled out, and men began to collect those who no longer moved. The action was so organized, so automatic, that I could be sure that it had happened many times before.

The sergeant had gone off, and there was nobody around to question. I went back into the lounge, unlocked the bar and got myself a drink. It was more than an hour later when Dick Prater came in and slumped into a chair. When he didn't speak, I asked if he'd gotten them all patched up.

"Oh, sure," he said. "All I can do. Sixteen of them today. You slap some antiseptic on them and put on surgical pads. Some of them will die tonight, and the others will be right as rain by tomorrow. The rate they heal is miraculous, but I can't often tell in advance

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which will survive and which kick off. You saw the fight?"

"Yes, damn it."

"Most of the injuries were horn stabs, like any other day. They're not often serious. Whether the attacker doesn't intend to kill or whether the attackee can dodge a horn thrust, I've never decided, but mostly they're through the shoulder or upper arm. The knife cuts are something else, but even those aren't usually very deep. The warriors tend to slice rather than stab."

"How many were killed outright?" I asked.

"Wouldn't know. They're gathered up by the meat wagon and buried in a trench. Usually about twice as many dead as wounded. That's par. I'm pooped. Pour me a bourbon, will you? Double, and never mind the ice."

He swallowed half the drink and let out a shaky sigh. "I shouldn't be here. I shouldn't be practicing medicine. In particular, I shouldn't be trying to handle field surgery. Haven't got the guts for it."

"So why are you here?"

"Exobiology. After my MD I stayed on at Hopkins, which is where I bloody well ought to be today, but I got interested in the biochemistry of the damned Unicorns. With this fool war going on the only way to get out here was to sign on for a tour of duty with the Army Medical Department. It seemed like not too bad a deal, two years service in exchange for the privilege of studying first-hand one of the most interesting species we've ever found."

"What's so interesting about them except that they beat the hell out of each other after they've been fed?"

He finished his drink and put the glass on the floor. "No, no more, thanks. I've got to get back to the hospital in a while. Oh, lots of things. They've got major blood vessels but no capillary system. The tissues are highly permeable to blood, and the erythrocytes, the red cells, are very small. That's why dealing with flesh wounds is such a problem. The most interesting thing is the horn. It isn't just a superficial protuberance developed for fighting or mating ritual. It contains a complex system of nerves and ganglia feeding directly into the brain, and it probably accounts for some of their odd behavior."

"Such as?"

"Well, their ability to pick up radio frequency transmission, of course."

"You're ahead of me. I didn't know they could."

He looked at me curiously. "You didn't? What in the bloody hell did you make of today's action then?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I didn't make anything of it. It was a sickening mess."

"Um. I assumed you knew the story. The Unicorns have all the senses we do, eyes, ears, apparently functional taste buds, a keen sense of smell. And they have the additional sense of radio perception."

"Do you mean they're telepathic?"

He wrinkled his forehead. "Not in the sense that you mean. They're equipped to pick up but not to broadcast. At least we've never detected anything of the sort in any frequency range. The question is, what was the use of the horns before we came along to foul up their lives."

"I don't follow you."

"We broadcast their orders."

"My God, do you mean that they were killing each other because we told them to do it?"

He sighed again, looked at the bourbon bottle, then looked away. "No, not exactly. Listen. Back before the war started, we had one established settlement, at Caillou Beach. There weren't more than a few hundred families, but to disseminate information and provide some entertainment, they set up a little broadcasting station. Almost at once they saw that the Unicorns were reacting to the broadcasts, not at first in any predictable way. They'd collect in crowds or disappear from the area completely or swarm into the river or fight. There was a note in *Science*, but I suppose you didn't read it. Well, they went back over the tapes, of course, and worked out a sort of a key. What we meant to broadcast and what it meant to them had no relationship. Mainly they responded to a few musical notes, a particular sequence. That was all right. Except for a couple of ill-advised experiments, we didn't abuse the situation.

"Then the Droogs arrived and began their usual business of regimenting, terrorizing and slaughtering the natives. By accident, or so I've been led to believe, we discovered the sequence that meant kill Droogs. Up to then the Droogs had had it all their own way. No resistance at all from the Unicorns and only a couple of Terran army installations. Quite a lot of the Droogs were taken by surprise and wiped out.

"But they listened to our radio, of course, and it wasn't long before they worked out a code which meant kill Terrans. So there it is. We're both using the Unicorns to fight our battles. Simple. Clean and simple."

"But they were fighting each other," I objected.

"Sure," Dick said, "but that's just an unfortunate

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

circumstance. We don't intend them to do it, but the signal isn't precise. We say, to the best of our ability, kill Droogs, and they do, but they kill off quite a few of each other at the same time. Let's face it. The Unicorns are a fairly belligerent race. They'll lie down and yell uncle to a Droog carrying an electric goad, but they do rather tend to fight. I suppose they have to. They have four young at a time, and that's every seventeen months. Seventeen of our months. With that rate of propagation they'd cover the planet in a few years if they didn't keep killing one another. I have no idea of their life expectancy. It can't be much."

"So that makes it all right," I said bitterly. "We get a few Droogs killed and help the Unicorns solve their population problem. Great."

One of the nurses came in. She was pretty in a mild sort of way, but her face was drawn with fatigue. I stood up, and she looked at me with some curiosity, then said to the doctor, "We've got another sick one."

Prater pushed himself up out of the chair. "Damn all."

"Can I come along?" I asked. "See the hospital?" I wanted to see a Unicorn up close, but it was clearly a bad time to make the request.

He hesitated, wanting to say no, but what he said was, "OK. Get a gown for him, Mary."

The hospital was clean and airy and not especially gruesome, but I didn't like it. We walked first through the ward containing the day's battle casualties. They were lying on narrow cots without pillows or covers, and all were naked except for surgical dressings protecting their wounds. What got me was that they lay perfectly still, only following us with their big goat-like, intelligent eyes, seeming full of entreaty.

Dick Prater paused for a moment by each cot, giving the occupant a nod and a smile. If they'd been human patients, the smile would have been reassuring, and maybe it was for the Unicorns too. I hoped so. At one cot he said, "This fellow will die in the next hour, though he isn't hurt any worse than number nine, there, who'll be up and about tonight. I wish I knew why. We have drugs available from a dozen worlds, but. . . ." He shrugged.

"They don't understand what you say?"

"I was speaking English. Some of them have a few words of Interlingua, those that we've happened to teach recently. They learn fast and forget it all within a week. They're not awfully intelligent, though

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you'd never guess it, listening to one who's just come out of the classroom. Poor little devils."

We went into the next ward with a similar line of cots, but half of them were unoccupied, and all the patients were sitting up cross-legged. Dick said that these would be discharged shortly and the survivors moved in from Ward A.

As we moved into the next, smaller, room, he remarked, "Another gift from Terra. One of our viruses is hitting the Unicorns. I don't like it. The rate of new infections is going up. We have a treatment, a shot, we can give them, but it's only fairly effective once they're down with it. It should be given ahead of time, you know."

The single patient in this room was asleep or unconscious. The color of his skin wasn't the golden tan I'd seen on other Unicorns, but a sick-looking yellow. The doctor felt the skin of his neck and raised his eyelids one after the other. Mary had some instruments on a tray, and Prater gave a hypodermic, a big shot. "Maybe," he said, "maybe."

"You mean he may recover?"

"We've had a dozen cases, three recoveries. Not very good. It would be helpful to get another half dozen."

"Why want a thing like that?"

"To demonstrate the continuing upward trend plainly enough for a layman to see it. I've laid in supplies of the drug, and I could go ahead with a prophylactic campaign on my own authority, but I ought to have Kimberle's concurrence. Well, we'll think about that later. We can walk through the men's ward now, but I'd just as soon you didn't talk to them. There are only a few."

Except for one man, those I saw didn't seem seriously injured. The one was missing a hand. He was under sedation and lay on his back, snoring. We walked back to our quarters and found an invitation for both of us to have cocktails with Colonel Kimberle at eighteen hundred.

I think Kimberle was a good CO. There were six of us, the cocktails were held to a discreet number, the talk was steered partly for my benefit. Howie Flanders had reported the booby trap, and there was a little talk about it, but booby-trapping was evidently a familiar Droog technique. Familiar and not often successful. The Droogs weren't subtle.

"They would be more successful," the colonel said pontifically, "if they simply erected a barricade and then shot at us while we were dismantling it, but they're rotten shots, and they don't

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

like personal combat. Their speed is getting somebody they can bully with whips and goads. Arrant cowards, really."

"How did today's engagement turn out?" I asked.

He pulled down the corners of his mouth. "Got a few. Most of them melted away as usual."

Dick evidently decided not to wait for additional cases of infection and broached the colonel on starting the prophylactic shots. Kimberle knew about the virus disease but would have preferred to ignore it.

"It'll be a goddamn nuisance, you know."

"It'll be a worse nuisance if we get thousands of them sick and dying on our hands."

"What do they think over at Caillou?"

"They've had only a few cases, but Dr. Witterling has ordered in new supplies of the drug. Adamantone."

"Well, if you're sure Witterling is with you, go ahead. You're the doctor. Will you want any help from me?"

"Yes. I'd appreciate it if you'd put out a low-intensity call for Unicorns in the morning, and let me have enough men to form them up into lines."

"OK, but not tomorrow. We're almost sure to be under attack tomorrow. Make it day after."

By the time dinner was over and we'd gotten back to our own quarters, I was ready for the sack. I lay awake for a while wondering what the hell I could put in my first dispatch that the army would let go out.

At breakfast I talked to a Russian officer, a major named Mashchenko. I asked him how far away the Droog base was.

"They operate differently," he said. "They make small camps, not permanent, keep moving around. Yesterday we uncovered them at five kilometers. Today they will be some other place, maybe closer, maybe farther. They are not easy to fight, Droogs."

"I've never seen one. But then I never saw a Unicorn until yesterday."

He gave a mock shudder. "Bad to fight, bad to look at. You have seen pictures, no?"

"I've seen some."

"They are tall, like so, with big shoulders and no neck at all. Their heads sit down between the shoulders. Do not worry, you will see some."

"Yesterday," I remarked, "some of our men set out after the Unicorns. Is that standard practice, to back them up?"

He nodded. "We give them only two weapons, a knife and a light pistol. The pistols are what we call throwaways. They fire twenty shots; then they are done and cannot be reloaded.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Unicorns lose them anyway. We follow up with automatic rifles and grenades. These are best in the jungle."

"No bombing?"

"No bombing. It is not a war, this, only a protective action. We hope to keep it civilized."

I looked at him to see if he was serious. He was. Just following the military custom of making words mean what he wanted them to mean.

"We must not repeat the mistakes we have made before. Little bombs get to be big bombs."

"Yes," I said, and excused myself. Maybe he was making sense at that. Wartime sense.

There had been more casualties brought in from the site of the engagement, but I didn't visit the hospital, and I didn't see Prater until midafternoon. He came into the lounge where I was composing paragraphs and tearing them up. He was so tired that he was shaking. I got him a drink and watched him relax slowly.

After a while he said, "I was wanting some more cases of that viral what-is-it. We got them. Three this morning. And two soldiers brought in with their guts spilled. One of them died on the table. One leg amputation. We're getting another doctor from Caillou. I've been yelling for a month."

He was feeling so sorry for himself that he didn't need any sympathy from me, but I was sorry for him anyway. I doubt if I ever met anyone worse qualified to handle battle casualties.

"How about the attack?" I asked. "Is it coming today?"

"Christ knows. I'm going to sleep for an hour unless the hospital calls. You don't need to hang around. I'll hear the buzzer."

The attack came not much later. I'd gone over to the officers' mess and was trying to pump the characters there for some human-interest stuff when there was a lot of shouting and the sound of small arms fire. Everybody started boiling out, grabbing helmets and armored vests in the hall. I helped myself and followed on out and bumped into Kimberle first thing.

"You damn fool, get back in there," he shouted, but then he jumped into a command car and took off for the thick of things.

They didn't hold still to be counted, but I didn't think there were as many Unicorns as had gone off to attack the Droogs. They swarmed out of two or three gaps in the jungle wall, and naturally they looked like the same Unicorns. They scattered all over the base, and our men scattered too, cradling

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

submachine guns. I should have thought that a line of light tanks moving slowly across the area might have taken care of the situation, even without firing, but there wasn't a single vehicle of any sort except Kimberle's. Perhaps it was part of an arms limitation deal, no tanks, heavy artillery, lasers, bombing planes. But who could make deals with the Droogs.

Our men were firing short bursts, trying to cut down one or two Unicorns at a time, and not sweeping their fire, which would have inflicted high mortality. I saw Terran soldiers dropping here and there, but as often as not they'd stagger back up and go on firing.

Like us, the Droogs had given the Unicorns only trivial weaponry, no firearms at all, but knives and short spears. It was quite possible that neither of us trusted them fully. They might decide to bite back without the prodding of radio directives. At the height of the fighting I could see no Droogs and thought that they were keeping completely out of it, but I was moving around, watching and listening, and presently I saw a line of their great hulking figures against the jungle background. They stayed hunkered down to present the smallest targets, and they shifted positions continually. Crouched, they seemed to be able to hurl a grenade a hundred yards, using a stiff-armed swing, and the barrage of grenades kept our men at a distance. Nevertheless, when they threaded their way back into the shelter of the trees, a few of their number were left behind, killed outright by stitchings of machine gun fire.

Action was tapering off. Unicorns began to fight among themselves and failed to concentrate on the men who were doing a selective mop-up job, trying to disable the more belligerent, trying to spare those who seemed to want to withdraw. Once I tripped over a wounded Unicorn who scrambled suddenly into my path on hands and knees, got up and kept going towards the woods.

There was a last chattering fusillade and the attack was over. Now vehicles appeared, support troops to load the wounded onto stretchers and gather up the dead. I found I could be of use as a stretcher-bearer and made several trips to the hospital; then that was over, too. I went to look at the Droogs.

They lay as they had fallen, waiting patiently now for a trench to receive them. They were as ugly as Mashchenko had said. Uglier, because they were totally hairless, fish-belly white and glistening. They stank, and it was still the stink of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

living. The sweat of terror, I thought, and wondered if it was a usable phrase.

Halfway back I looked at my watch and found it sticky with blood, and so I went again to the hospital and took a chair in the waiting area, feeling a little dizzy. After a good while one of the nurses stopped and looked at me and asked what I wanted. It was the other nurse. She was an Indonesian and her name was Lecki. I said there was no hurry, but she yanked me into one of the small rooms and put my forearm into a pan of warm water. There was a clean knife cut three or four inches long, but shallow, probably done by the Unicorn I'd tripped over. When the water was a nice shade of pink and the arm reasonably clean, she put in a row of clips with a gadget that looked like a stapler. Then she bandaged it, gave me a needle of something and shooed me out fast.

For some reason that made no sense, the bandage on my arm and the ache made me feel better, as if I had contributed something and thereby diminished the idiocy of the whole performance. Nuts.

I went back to the lounge, mixed a drink and sat down with a scratch pad on my knee.

7/27/92: TODAY DROOGS MADE SNEAK RAID ON BASE FIVE FORTY-SIX MILES NORTHEAST CAILLOU. ATTACK REPULSED WITH MINOR CASUALTIES. A NUMBER OF DROOGS AND REBEL UNICORNS SLAIN AND DEPLETED ENEMY FORCE RETREATED TO JUNGLE HIDEOUT. INJURED UNICORNS GET GOOD CARE IN BASE HOSPITAL. TERRAN NURSES SAY ARE GOOD PATIENTS. FOLLOWING RECOVERY MOST OR ALL WILL SUPPORT OUR DEFENSE POSITION. BASE FIVE SOON TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL MEDICAL SERVICES TO INDIGENOUS POPULATION. END.

You lousy prostitute, I said to myself, and went off to headquarters to file the dispatch. It was pious enough to get cleared straight through, and innocent of any news value. On my way back, to punish myself maybe, I went into the morgue. In the long room just four of the pallets were occupied. The bodies of the Unicorns would have been taken to a more anonymous resting place. I turned back one of the blankets and saw the face of the sergeant I'd been talking to. His dog tag was lying on the blanket, and I could have learned his name, but it didn't seem to matter.

Colonel Kimberle decided there wouldn't be any action next day and gave Dick Prater a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

go-ahead, and, for a wonder, a second MD came in on the morning flight from Caillou, assigned to Base Five. He was a young man, straight out of his residency, jittery and very serious. There was no chance to talk to Prater, but the operation was conducted out of doors and I was able to watch.

The low-power broadcast brought in only a few hundred Unicorns. Their behavior was different from when they were being primed for battle. They were herded into lines and stood waiting quietly for whatever was to be done to them. Mentally I echoed Prater's expression, poor little devils. Whether you liked or disliked an extraterrestrial species depended partly, at least at first, on how they looked. You liked Unicorns instinctively, just as you loathed Droogs.

A barricade had been put up, and at the heads of the two lines were narrow gates with Prater and the new doctor waiting behind them, each with a nurse. Trays filled with packages of syringes stood beside them. There was a stage wait while the MD's conferred; then a soldier trotted up with two gallon cans of paint and some brushes.

"Is gold all right, Doctor?" he asked. "The green is all in drums."

"Sure, let's go."

After a slow start they got the thing down to a routine. One soldier would lead a Unicorn through the gate. A nurse would hold his arm and swab the spot to be injected. The doctor would jab with his already-filled syringe, and the nurse would give another wipe. The used hypo would be dropped into a box and another picked up. The soldier with the paint would give two swipes to the Unicorn's horn, and off he'd go. glittering in the sun and shaking his head as if he'd gotten water in his ears.

There was an army photographer taking shots of the operation with a camera worth a thousand bucks or so, and I went over to talk to him. "What do you suppose they use gold paint for, besides marking immunized Unicorns?"

The soldier wielding the brush overheard me. "The colonel has his name on his door in gold letters."

"For that you need two gallons?"

"Mister, we've got two hundred gallons. In this man's army you order something and either you don't get it or you get drowned in it. That's why they got computers."

The Unicorns, once released, stopped now and then as if to think the whole thing over. They collected in the middle distance looking faintly like

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

something out of a heraldic tapestry. I asked the photographer whether he had some newsworthy prints I could buy from him unofficially, and he asked if I had any unofficial Scotch.

For a change the Unicorns seemed in no hurry to get away and stayed in a bunch. I had never heard any of them speak and wasn't sure they had a spoken language of their own, but this crowd somehow looked as if they were talking together. Amicably. No fights.

It took about thirty seconds to process each one, and the last one got his shot and departed in a little under two hours. Then they all turned and made off at a dead run.

Kimberle put out with cocktails again that night to welcome the new medic, and there was a lot of jocularity about gold-plated horns. Prater wanted to go on with the campaign next day. He took the virus business very seriously, and Dr. Hamm, the new man, backed him up. But the colonel said no, it was time to go after the Droogs again.

As it turned out, the colonel didn't have any say in the matter. At dawn the base area, as big as, say, four football fields, was beginning to fill up with Unicorns, and pretty soon they were standing almost shoulder to shoulder, perfectly quiet, just waiting. He grumbled some, then gave in and let Prater have enough men to organize the lines and several more to supplement the medical aides in giving shots. They learned fast enough, and between the doctors, the nurses and the helpers, it went very well.

A scattering of gold horns was evident in the morning mob scene. They made no attempt to go through a second time, but helped to straighten out the lines and keep them moving. Kimberle came out and watched. "They're grateful, Doctor," he told Prater. "I've never seen anything like this cooperation. Your Adamantone, or whatever it is, must be making them feel better."

That night in the lounge Prater was feeling relaxed and talkative in spite of having pushed a hypodermic plunger a thousand odd times. "You know they don't care a hoot in hell about the shots," he said. "They can't have any conception of immunization. It's got to be the paint that appeals to them. Gives them distinction."

"Then why," I inquired, "do they want all their cousins to be as handsome as they are. You'd think the first ones would want to keep it for themselves."

He sighed. "There's so much we don't understand about them. You were asking, for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

instance, whether they might be telepathic, and I said I didn't think so, but I'll qualify that. There's some evidence that their life patterns have changed in quite recent times, recent in evolutionary terms. Their teeth would indicate that they have been carnivorous or perhaps omnivorous. At present, except for combat rations, they live on fruit, seeds, nuts and probably various plants. At present they build no shelters or anything else, but, again not too long ago, they put together crude stone buildings, and, what's more, they ornamented them with carvings and paintings in blue and ocher. Now the significant thing about these murals is that they show, in addition to Unicorns, a single type of animal rather like a Terran crocodile but with longer legs, a thoroughly nasty-looking specimen. In every drawing these animals have wavy lines radiating from their heads. Do you get the picture?

"My idea is this, that at one time these beasts were, first of all, a source of food to the Unicorns and vice versa. It may even have been in doubt for some millennia which would wipe out the other. But to their misfortune the beasts radiated electrical energy at radio frequences, and the Unicorns developed through the painful process of survival the ability to detect and locate them. So the beasts died, down to the last one. This is all speculative, but don't tell me that radio reception is any more incredible than eyesight.

"In any case," Dick went on, "I believe that the beasts' unfortunate propensity to broadcast their whereabouts spelled their doom and left the Unicorns virtually the only animal life on Licorne, and so they bloody well had to become vegetarians. Radio perception became useless."

"Like the often-cited vermiform appendix," said Dr. Hamm.

"I thought you were going to offer an explanation of why it pleased them to have their horns painted," I said. "Are you getting around to suggesting that covering up their horns with a metallic pigment blocks off this now-useless ability?"

"Something like that, if in some way the radio perception had become worse than useless and was actually a drawback."

"Having to fight on demand might be a drawback," I suggested.

Dick shook his head. "It ought to be something more than that. As I told you, they're rather given to fighting."

"The sun," Hamm said suddenly.

"What about the sun?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I was talking to the radioman over at Caillou. He told me that the sun here puts out so much radio static that it's sometimes nearly impossible to put out a broadcast. They have to use filters or something on the reception end. So the poor Unicorns have to go through their whole lives listening to hisses and crackles that have no rational pattern."

"Not listening," Dick corrected. "Perceiving. It could be substantially worse. Yes, it makes sense. They could put up with it when they were battling the beasts for survival, but that's been long forgotten. More than a nuisance. Actually incapacitating, perhaps, like trying to live in a boiler factory."

We slept on it, and in the morning it still seemed plausible enough to talk over with the colonel. But first there were Unicorns to take care of. The whole base area had filled up again, and there was nothing for it but to repeat yesterday's performance. The colonel was uneasy, but he had to accept the situation. Anyway, there were no Droog attacks, and scouting parties to the two nearest Droog camps revealed no activity and no Unicorns to be seen except those unfortunates wearing leg shackles. Experimentally we sent out a call meaning food, come and get it, and we got only a handful of customers, none of them gilded.

More Adamantone was flown over from Caillou and the program went on for several days with gradually decreasing numbers of clients. Then it ended abruptly. No more Unicorns with or without glittering horns. And sometime before that, nobody knew when, one of the storage sheds was broken into, and all the rest of the gold paint was taken away. So the Unicorns were taking over their own paint jobs, and there could be no doubt that that was what was important to them. It seemed, though, that they had some understanding of the reason for the injections. Gold horns began to bring in sick unicorns and leave them at the door of the hospital. There were some recoveries and some deaths. No Unicorns responded to any radio signal.

General Clayton flew over from Caillou with several members of his staff, and they spent a couple of hours closeted in Kimberle's office, then took off again. I didn't get any details of the conference, naturally, except that Prater told me that Caillou was starting to use gold paint, and that the other bases would start it as soon as Clayton had made up his mind.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I saved up a few hundred words of dispatch time and concoted what I thought was an amusing story headlined THE UNICORNS ARE HAPPY, but it didn't get past the censors. The colonel was worried, and I expect General Clayton was too, about the future conduct of the war. The Unicorns were becoming more cooperative by the day, but what, he demanded, were the Droogs making of it. All hell might break loose any minute.

We kept our eyes on the Droog camps, of course. There were few Unicorns to be seen, and our scouts reported that the Droogs were behaving in an aimless fashion. They needed somebody to kick around or, more specifically, to do their work for them. That was the way Droogs operated. They liked worlds with obedient native populations. We, on the other hand, like worlds where we can build highways and schools, and clean up the natives whether they want to be clean or not.

Forty days later the Droogs began to go. They must have been fed up. Two of their big interstellar ships arrived and orbited at a hundred miles or so. They were big, visible to the naked eye at dawn and dusk. Fliers came down and lifted them out. There weren't many. Our own troops had knocked off some, and after the ships were gone we found others sick or dead. Something on Licorne hadn't been good for them.

While the Unicorns were keeping clear of the Droog camps, they more or less moved in with us, bringing their wives and girl friends, poking into everything and getting very much underfoot. We were the bringers of paint.

They began to talk, too, in fragmentary Interlingua, and outdoor classes were set up, and those of us who knew the language were pressed into service as teachers. They learned fast and, now that their brains weren't being addled by solar static, they didn't forget a thing.

I go home day after tomorrow, since there isn't any war to report. Dick Prater is going too, on terminal leave, but he says he's coming back to Licorne as a civilian exobiologist and to teach medicine.

I wonder if Interplanetary will give me a decent word rate for a series of feature articles.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fantasy and Science Fiction
MARKET PLACE

BOOKS-MAGAZINES

SCIENTIFANTASY specialist: Books, magazines. Free catalog. Gerry de la Ree, 7 Cedarwood, Saddle River, N.J. 07458.

ONE issue of P.S. Magazine for $.75. Humor and nostalgia by Jean Shepherd, Nat Hentoff, Isaac Asimov, Alfred Bester, William Tenn, others. Mercury, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

SPECIALISTS: Science Fiction, Fantasy, Weird Fiction. Books, Pocketbooks. Lists issued. Stephen's Book Service, Post Office Box 321, Kings Park, L.I., New York 11754.

SF-FANTASY books (hardcover), mysteries, westerns. Scarce and OP titles. Free lists. Aspen Bookhouse, RD 1, Freeville, N.Y. 13068.

For Sale: Science fiction, westerns, others. Wanted: Doc Savage, Shadow, others. We buy collections. Send list, enclosing stamp. Magazine Center, Box 214, Little Rock, Ark. 72203.

SF-Fantasy books for sale. Gordon Barber, 35 Minneapolis Ave., Duluth, Minn. 55803.

WANTED: Books published by Arkham House, Fantasy Press, etc. Pre-1950 pulp magazines. Singles, entire collections. Gerry de la Ree, 7 Cedarwood, Saddle River, N.J. 07458.

Interested in Sheckley Books — Thomas Whittington, 6100 Walnut, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15206.

Wanted — Collections — Worlds of Tomorrow, Wonder Stories, Fantastic Universe, quote price. Abe Josephsohn, 2112 Broadway, New York City 10023.

SCIENCE FICTION, MYSTERIES (new, hardcover.) Save to 70%. Free catalog. Spencer, 3016-D South Halladay, Santa Ana, Calif. 92705.

SF—Fantasy magazines, books, paperbacks. List free. Collections also purchased. Robert Madle, 4406 Bestor Drive, Rockville, Md. 20853

100 page catalog. Arkham, Fantasy, Burroughs, Mirage Press, Science Fiction Pulp, paperbacks, comics. Send 75¢. We also buy SF and comic collections. Send lists. Passaic Book Center, 594 Main Ave., Passaic, N.J. 07055.

Astounding-Analog Nov. 1943 to date. Complete $250 or individually priced. Childs, 2519 El Tonas Way, Carmichael, Ca. 95608.

Horse Racing Books — old & new — unique collection. List available for $1.00. T. Ryan, 642 55th St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11220.

FREE book & magazine search. Sci-fi our specialty. Send your wants to: Reznick Search Service, P. O. Box 3231, L.A., Calif. 90028.

PHILOSOPHY: The Nature of Form in Process: Information processing from Plato to present (hardcover), 111 pp., $5.00, postage included. WRITERS: Publishing short-short SF with impact. Also, original, (scientific) philosophy books. THE PORTER LIBRARY, P.O. Box 1564, Burbank, Calif. 91505.

MILLIONS HAPPIER through the applied philosophy in the book Dianetics: Modern Science of Mental Health by L. Ron Hubbard. Send $5.00 to Bookstore-FS, Founding Church of Scientology, 1812 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

HYPNOTISM

LEARN WHILE ASLEEP. Hypnotize with your recorder, phonograph. Astonishing details, sensational catalog free. Sleep-learning Research Association, Box 24-FS, Olympia, Washington, 98502.

Hypnotism Revealed. Free Illustrated Details. Powers, 12015 Sherman Road, North Hollywood, California 91605.

FREE Hypnotism, Self-Hypnosis. Sleep learning Catalog! Drawer G-400, Ruidoso, New Mexico 88345.

Do you have something to advertise to sf readers? Books, magazines, typewriters, telescopes, computers, space-drives, or misc. Use the F&SF Market Place at these low, low rates: $3.00 for minimum of ten (10) words, plus 30¢ for each additional word. Send copy and remittance to: Adv. Dept., Fantasy and Science Fiction, P.O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

OCCULT

INNER SPACE. The Magazine of the Psychic and Occult, featuring interviews with Isaac Bashevis Singer and Isaac Asimov, Hollywood and the Occult, How to Consult a Medium, and more. Send $1.00 to Mercury Press, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

FANTASTIC — BIZARRE — UNUSUAL! 96-page illustrated catalog of 2,000 curious items — Magic, Occult, Satanism, Sorcery, Voodoo, Witchcraft. 25¢ International, Box 2010-U, Toluca Lake, Calif. 91602.

WITCHCRAFT: Black Book of Spells $2. Equipment, curios, incenses. Free catalog. Arcana, Box 14, Broadway NSW, 2007, Australia.

EDUCATION

Earn College degrees at home. Many subjects. Florida State Christian College, Post Office Box 1674, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida 33302.

PERSONAL

WITCHCRAFT, VOODOO HEAD-QUARTERS. Spells Galore! Occult Correspondence Club. Catalog, 25¢. Cauldron, Box 403-FSF, Rego Park, N.Y. 11374.

Help Invalid. Send anything. Grateful, Box 90092, Atlanta, Ga. 30341.

MISCELLANEOUS

ELECTROENCEPHALOPHONE. Alpha-Theta brainwave feedback instrument. Meditation. Creativity. Relaxation. J & J Enterprises. 24120-N 3PW, Bothell, Wash. 98011.

ESP LABORATORY. This new research/service group can help you. For FREE information write: Al G. Manning, ESP Laboratory, 7559 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90046.

FOREIGN EDITIONS of Fantasy and Science Fiction. A few copies of French, German, Italian, Portuguese and British editions available at 75¢ each; three for $2.00. Mercury Press, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

Great science fiction radio dramas on tape. Catalog 50¢. Golden Age Radio, Box 8404-SF, St. Louis, Missouri 63132.

MINISTERS, Chaplains, Missionaries wanted. We train, ordain, employ. Christian Church, 2456 West Broad, Columbus, Ohio 43204.

Virgil Finlay prints — eight heavy paper — Three Dollars. Flood, 1663 Oswego St., East Meadow, New York 11554.

FRIENDS INTERNATIONALLY. Free details. ATLANTIS, 31766 Lake, Avon Lake, Ohio 44012.

ANTIGRAVITY DEVICE. Brochure 35¢. AGD, Box 3062-FS, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74003.

Position of planets at your birth engraved on metal charm (with chain) $2. Send date and year. J. Bolling, Box 173, Mitchell, Indiana 47446.

YOUR MARKET PLACE

A market is people—alert, intelligent, active people.

Here you can reach 150,000 people (averaging three readers per copy—50,000 paid circulation). Many of them are enthusiastic hobbyists—collecting books, magazines, stamps, coins, model rockets, etc.—actively interested in photography, music, astronomy, painting, sculpture, electronics.

If you have a product or service of merit, tell them about it. The price is right: $3.00 for a minimum of ten (10) words, plus 30¢ for each additional word. To keep the rate this low, we must request remittance with the order.

Post office box and number count as two words. No charge for zip code.

Closing date is 10th of third preceding month; e.g., June issue, published May 1, closes March 10.

Fantasy & Science Fiction, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

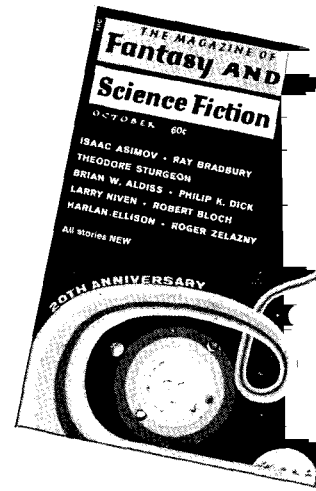
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A MERCURY PUBLICATION

The Imprint of Quality

(since 1937)

THE MAGAZINE OF
Fantasy AND
Science Fiction



F&SF's readers are both young (84% under 45) and educated (62% have attended college). When they want relaxation or stimulation in reading, they turn to the best works of imagination and to FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION. "F&SF regularly supplies the finest the field has to offer in the way of short fiction"–*Clifton Fadiman.* Compelling fiction, along with informative and stimulating features on Books (James Blish) and Science (Isaac Asimov), have earned F&SF its reputation as tops in the field.

Portuguese Edition

French Edition

German Edition

MERCURY PRESS, INC. • 347 East 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED